



Part 1

Space distorted, and the view before his eyes changed instantly.

Upon returning to his room with its grand desk, Ainz sighed in relief. He had teleported many times before, and he knew there should not be any problems this time round, but he had only been in this unknown world for a few days. Thus, the fear that he might teleport to some strange place still worried him.

He caressed the Ring of Ainz Ooal Gown on his right ring finger and looked around him.

There was nobody around.

That was good. He did not want anyone to see what he was about to do.

Ainz was about to walk towards the table when he stopped and looked up. He possessed magic vision which could see through invisibility, and noticed the figures of the Eight Edge Assassins standing by on the ceiling.

Their gazes met.

No, Ainz might not know which direction their composite eyes were looking at, but he was probably not mistaken by the feeling of their eyes meeting. He felt troubled about others

looking at him, although that might just be Ainz being overly self-conscious.

“All of you, leave.”

In response to Ainz’ declaration, one of the Eight Edge Assassins — who was probably their leader— answered: “Pardon my impudence, Ainz-sama. There might be intruders who might make an attempt on your life here. To avoid this tiny possibility, please allow us to stay here to serve as your shield. Please reconsider.”

“Intruders? Here? I can only take this as an insult to the ones guarding the eight floors above me.”

“Ah! That is not what your humble servant is implying! Please forgive my transgression. However, if something were to happen to the last Supreme Being who stayed with us, that would be our shared responsibility. To consider all possibilities of danger and protect the Supreme Beings is the duty of everyone here. We will shut our eyes, mouth and ears, and protect your majestic self while hiding in the shadows.”

It mentioned something about hiding in the shadows, but to Ainz, the bug shaped monsters were just hanging prominently from the ceiling.

He understood their wish to serve, but he couldn’t allow others to know what he was going to do next.

Hmm? He suddenly realized what he felt was similar to a

fourteen year old boy who wanted a lock for his own room.

“Rejected. I will be conducting a secret ritual in this room. This is a secret amongst secrets that absolutely no one can witness. I trust all of you, but I want to minimize the risk of this leaking out... These are my words as the ruler of the Great Tomb of Nazarick, understand?”

“— I hear and obey. We have no objections since it is the will of the Supreme Being.”

The Eight Edge Assassins descended from the ceiling. They detached their legs from the surface above them and fell to the ground.

They landed without any noise and stood up as one.

“We will retreat from this room now.”

After Ainz nodded, they left the room elegantly in a disciplined line. For some reason, this reminded Ainz of the nature documentary clip of ants marching in a line, shown to him by Blue Planet.

After the last of them had left the room and bowed to Ainz from the corridor, it closed the door gently.

Ainz scanned his surroundings once more. The ceiling as well, of course.

— No one else was around. The room was truly empty now.

There were two set of doors in this room. One was the one used by the Eight Edge Assassins, which led into the corridor, while the other was linked to the other rooms— Ainz' personal chambers, which comprised several rooms just like the royal suite in hotels, such as the bedroom, changing room and bathroom — all connected together.

Ainz walked towards the door leading to the other rooms and opened it easily. He poked his head in and looked inside.

There was no sign of anyone else. Even if he listened closely, he still couldn't hear the sound of another person.

He thought that a maid might be cleaning the other rooms, but that didn't seem to be the case.

No, he couldn't let his guard down.

Ainz let go of his relaxation and tensed up once again.

Walking across the room, Ainz opened the door leading to the corridor. On either side of the door was a bipedal insect-type monster assigned by Cocytus, standing there as sentries. He didn't see any signs of the Eight Edge Assassins. They couldn't have gone far, but they were not here.

"...The two of you."

"Sir! Ainz-sama, what are your orders?"

Stopping his minions who were about to kneel down to show their fealty, Ainz asked them,

“How long have you been standing guard here?”

“Sir! Twenty five hours— No, it’s twenty five hours and forty minutes.”

Ainz blinked his non-existent eyes.

“Yes?”

He could tell his minions were troubled. Ainz was certain of it.

It was nothing to be happy about, but his skill at reading the expressions of insects had been rising rapidly. It would be a good thing if his observation skills improved, but if that wasn’t the case, it would be a useless ability.

No, there were insectoid monsters led by Cocytus under his charge, this should be a very useful ability for the ruler of Nazarick.

— The thoughts that arose in a corner of the brain that he wasn’t even sure existed were dismissed by his rage.

Now wasn’t the time to consider all these. He should be thinking about the inhuman working conditions of his servants instead.

He let a weak-sounding “um” slip out, and tried covering it up with a clumsy cough. Ainz then questioned his servants:

“I ask again, you said it has been one day?”

“That is so. It has been one day since we were bestowed the honour of sentry duty before Ainz-sama’s room.”

“Is that so... One day... You are here on Cocytus’ orders, I presume?”

“Yes, Ainz-sama.”

Standing sentry for an entire day without any relief. This would put any unethical company to shame. Ainz was speechless as he thought about Cocytus. His last farewell with Herohero was still fresh on his mind. If Herohero hadn’t been run ragged from work, and was healthy and mentally fresh, he might be standing here with Ainz right now.

How could he allow his own subordinates to be forced into such a situation which robbed Herohero of all his vitality?

Ainz’s job took up a lot of his time, but he at least had time to play virtual games.

There were many who gave up gaming because of the drastic change in their living environment. Herohero didn’t cancel his account, but he was as good as retired— If that wasn’t the case, he wouldn’t have left his items behind and told Ainz he was free to do whatever he wanted with them.

As he fumed silently, Ainz announced:

“Carrying out your duties over such long hours without rest must have taken its toll on you. Your hard work is worthy of praise. You may hand your duties over to your replacements, so go back and rest. If Cocytus says anything to you, tell him these are my orders.”

However, the reaction of his subordinates was completely different from what he expected.

“Could, could it be that we, we did something wrong?”

“What? No, you didn’t do anything wrong...”

Their voices were trembling, but it wasn’t because of confusion, but due to some other reason. This made Ainz furrow the eye brows in his heart.

Was Cocytus that scary? While Ainz was considering that possibility, the servants continued:

“If that is so, why are you ordering us to stand down and hand over our duties?”

The pitiful pleas of his servants baffled Ainz once again.

“Why? Do you even need to ask? Keeping the same posture while standing sentry for twenty five hours must be very tiring, no?”

“No such thing. There is nothing tiring about this. Being

assigned to guard Ainz-sama's room is a heavenly experience for us."

Are you sure you're not about to ascend to heaven because of fatigue?

"No, that... Ahem. You won't be able to concentrate like this. I think changing shift routinely would ensure tighter security, right?"

"Please don't worry. When we were dispatched here, Cocytus-sama loaned us an item allowing us to operate without need for sleep. Being assigned to the important post of guarding Ainz-sama's room makes us happy, we can't afford to let our guard down."

Ainz could feel the determination of their voices.

"Is, is that so? Do your best in your assigned tasks then."

He might be shaken, but Ainz still nodded with the lofty attitude of a master.

"We are extremely grateful, Ainz-sama."

He was thinking that he should be the one thanking them, but as their master, Ainz couldn't say that. However, there was something he should say.

"Thank you, and good work."

“Yes!”

Thank you and good work.

A member of society who didn't use these two terms appropriately would be a failure.

“Before you carry out your duties, let me ask you this. While I was away today, did anyone enter my chambers?”

“No one entered today. Only Sebas-sama, the maids and Albedo-sama stopped by the room, but left after learning that Ainz-sama was away. None of them left any messages.”

He felt curious about why they came in the first place, but that wasn't the issue right now.

“I understand, let me confirm this once more, nobody entered the room, correct?”

“Yes.”

It was safe inside the room then. He had asked everything he wanted to know.

“Don't push yourselves too hard, and carry on the good work.”

Ainz closed the door as he listened to the spirited response from the two of them. He made his way through the rooms once more and sat himself onto a chair.

Ainz scanned his surroundings again.

Even though he knew no one was around, he still looked around carefully. What he was about to do was very crucial and could not be seen by anyone.

Ainz regretted a little about not learning more information-type spells and began casting several defensive spells.

He felt he might be worrying too much, but this required the utmost care.

After finishing all his preparations, Ainz opened his item window — or rather, the space where he stored his items, and took out the things he wanted.

After infiltrating the library, he had used several concealment spells and brought out several books in absolute secrecy.

He retrieved one, and placed it on the table.

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He retrieved one, and placed it on the table—

He repeated this action a dozen times. The volumes were all quite thick, and formed a tower on the table.

“This... I messed up.”

Ainz realized his mistake and let out a tiny sigh of regret.

There were too many. If it was just the Elder Lich Chief Librarian, it would have been rather simple to evade its eyes. But hiding from the Overlords' senses, the highest-placed class of undead, was extremely difficult. For Ainz, who lacked any special infiltration ability, running into any of the five Overlords would mean he had been discovered.

That's why he used this rare chance to take all these books out. However, it would take a lot of time to finish reading all this.

"... So, what should I do... I don't have a place to put these, it would be troublesome if they were discovered."

It would be easy to hide one piece of paper, but it was a different matter for a small pile of books. Not much time had passed since he came to this world, so Ainz's table wasn't a mess like the desk Suzuki Satoru had in his company. It was kept neat and tidy, without anything unnecessary on it.

As Ainz was about to open his drawers and put the books inside, he stopped.

There shouldn't be any subordinates who would open Ainz' drawers, but was that really true?

In the experience of Suzuki Satoru the salaryman, there were

rude people who would nonchalantly open other people's drawers.

Where else could he keep them?

He came up with plans to stash them in his bedroom, the changing room, the bathroom— all the other rooms, but there was a chance the maid cleaning the room might find it.

His mother passed away early so he hadn't experienced that before, but there were guild members who returned to their room to find their porn collections displayed neatly on their table, which turned their mind blank. According to them, the worst thing was that their mothers didn't say anything during dinner, even though they were face to face.

It was a second-hand account, but Ainz could empathize with how they felt. Even though his undead body was resistant to powerful psychological attacks, he was reluctant to suffer that kind of pain.

"Ahh, in that case, I can only place it here."

Ainz opened his space and placed the books inside once more. Considering that books were very low-level items, it was easy for information magic spells or those with levels in thief-type classes to read the book title. That was why Ainz didn't want to carry it on him, but that was the only way since it was also the safest method.

He stored the books one by one, and only two were left in the

end.

The books' titles were—

“The Secret of Building Trust With One’s Subordinates”

“Things That Hated Bosses Don’t Do”

— These two.

The copyright for these works had expired, having been published over seventy years ago.

Ainz sat before the table, picked one of the books up, and started browsing through the pages.

The contents of these business books had strongly influenced Suzuki Satoru the salaryman.

“I see...”

“That’s true...”

“If only there were bosses like that...”

Ainz spoke those words unconsciously while he read. As he focused on digesting the wisdom within, he sighed in admiration.

“This is great. To think there could be such a good business book.”

Suzuki Satoru didn't read many business books. He wasn't too passionate about his salaryman job, and didn't have anyone that could be called his subordinates. Naturally, he had no intention of understanding the mentality of a boss.

However, he was no longer a small time employee, but the ruler of the Great Tomb of Nazarick. Using the positions in a company as an example, he had to run the organization as the president.

“Willing to take on responsibility. Open and straightforward. Easygoing and calm. Accepts opinions humbly—”

An ideal boss.

But it was easy for anyone to talk about theory. The ones who put these into actual practice were few and far between. That was why there were so few competent bosses despite the existence of such excellent business books.

Ainz, who knew about these things called bosses, made a bitter face.

In reality, they tended to be far removed from their idealized forms.

Ainz, who had almost fallen into deep musing, shook his head and purged the hardships of the world from his mind. Right now, he shouldn't be agonizing over the gap between the ideal and reality.

Instead, as Ainz Ooal Gown, he had to earn the trust of the NPCs and work hard to be a great ruler.

Ainz's gaze fell onto the book once more, with these new thoughts in mind.

There was much that was written on it, but it wasn't something he could digest in one sitting. This required dedicated work over a long period of time. That was the only way Ainz could become everyone's ideal boss.

However, that would take too long. To a starving man, ten thousand yen right now was more valuable than a hundred million yen a few years later.

"So what should I do?"

Although it was too early to worry about that before finishing even a single book, as an undead, Ainz had no need for rest or sleep. He still had some remnants of humanity left and would feel mental fatigue, but he could work without rest for 24 hours a day if he had to. Which meant that if he wanted to spend the entire day reading, he could finish the whole book within a day. However, browsing through ten lines at a time meant he would miss some points.

It wasn't a bad idea to absorb the essence of all these books before making his move.

— However.

Could he really digest all these materials in one day?

Unfortunately, Suzuki Satoru didn't have the chance to pursue higher education, so the knowledge he gained from interacting with others was biased. If someone like that was to read ten books a day, would he be able to make sense of all these concepts?

It was still fine since he hadn't even finished these two books yet. But if he was to absorb knowledge from multiple books, situations where the contents from different books contradicted each other might arise. That would be out of his league. Would it be better to do something now now before he became confused?

Ainz looked up into the sky, trapped in the maze of his thoughts.

Right now, he was eager to try out what he had learned and act immediately.

But then, another issue presented itself.

Which part of which book should he reference, and what should he do with what he had learned?

Ainz flipped through the book he was reading, letting the pages turn rapidly.

The moment he reached a certain page, inspiration struck like a bolt of lightning, electrifying Ainz's nonexistent brain.

He turned back to that page in a hurry and started reading in earnest.

The page was about conversation with one's subordinates, the pros and cons of asking them about their troubles and worries. Some subordinates kept things to themselves because they were reluctant to discuss about it with their superiors. That was why the superiors should be proactive and ask them about their problem.

Ainz nodded as if he had found a way in.

This was it.

This was definitely it.

“— A heart to heart talk. I need to ask if anything is troubling them.”

It would be bad if anyone fell into depression because they had to hold it all in. This reminded Ainz of the drained figure of Herohero he saw before coming to this world.

The NPCs might be feeling uneasy right now, since they had just been transferred to this world.

A debuff known as “fear” existed in Yggdrasil. Hence, it could

be treated with spells. However, there was no debuff called “troubled”. In that case, it might not be curable by magic. There was no telling if such a debuff existed, but he should plan for the worst case scenario and act on it.

— He didn’t want the NPCs to be like Herohero.

When Ainz made up his mind, he started thinking about his next move.

Nazarick was vast and had a large population. Even if he excluded the lower tiered servants and the automatically-spawned monsters, there were still a large number of NPCs. It would take too much time to talk to them individually.

No, even so, he should do so anyway for the sake of the NPCs.

As the last one to stay behind, Ainz had to take up the duty of his guild members as well.

He would try it with a few people first, observe how it went, and then talk to the other people later.

Next would be whom he should choose, and Ainz came up with an answer immediately.

Besides the Floor Guardians who were responsible for all sorts of important jobs, who else would be an excellent choice for this task?

As for his first choice, Ainz already had someone in mind.

Ainz stood up from his seat and issued the order to the two guards outside to summon a certain man.

Part 2

An old man entered Ainz's room. However, his body was ramrod-straight, as though it had been made from steel. Even through his clothes, one could tell that his body was sturdy and toned.

This was the butler, Sebas. Ainz welcomed him with open arms.

"Thank you for coming down, Sebas. You're earlier than I expected. Were you in the vicinity?"

"No, but when Ainz-sama summoned me, I came with all possible haste."

His posture and voice was filled with strength. The reason why Ainz had called Sebas first was because he was the most familiar with the 9th floor, which was arguably the floor with conditions most similar to that of the real world. In comparison to the ones who resided in the lava-filled terrain of the 7th floor, or the frozen wasteland of the 5th floor, Sebas' knowledge and experience would be the most relevant to what Satoru Suzuki had already learned.

Thus, he was the most ideal test subject for this experiment.

"Is that so? Then, you've worked hard... I feel bad about

making you rush. Forgive my interruption of your duties.”

“What are you saying, Ainz-sama? As a servant of Nazarick, there is no more important task than serving Ainz-sama.”

“My—”

“Please, there is no need to thank us. All is as it should be.”

“Is that so,” Ainz replied. He swallowed despite not having a throat to do so with.

He had not used the ‘Message’ spell, but sent a runner to summon Sebas.

That was because he wanted to give himself some time to rehearse the lines he wanted to say. Of course, he had thought of waiting until after he finished his practice to call Sebas over, but the problem was determining when exactly his practice was finished. It might take a year or more for him to perfectly present himself as Ainz the ruler.

In truth, he was merely buying time to stiffen his resolve.

Ainz turned to Sebas and spoke to him in the most relaxed, yet dignified tone he could manage. It was a voice that he felt best suited his status as a ruler.

“Are you experiencing any difficulties that you wish to inform me of? Feel free to speak your mind.”

“There is nothing of that sort, Ainz-sama.”

Sebas’ swift response left several seconds of silence between them.

Ainz realised his mistake. He could not ask these questions from the position of a ruler. The other party would naturally be awed into submission and refuse to speak up.

Ainz resisted the urge to dip his head as the shame of his mishandling of the situation washed over him. He spoke to Sebas again. This time, he would be more tender and compassionate.

“There’s no need to stand on formality. It’s my job to make your lives happier. Just like— that’s right. You can speak to me about anything, even the most minor of issues.”

“No, there’s nothing like that, Ainz-sama. This Great Tomb of Nazarick that Ainz-sama rules over is nothing less than a blessed sanctuary for us. We are not inconvenienced in the slightest by living here.”

Ainz lowered his line of sight, and then smiled as he answered.

“Is that so... perhaps that’s the case. Sebas, I’m relieved to hear that.”

“Your relief fills me with joy, Ainz-sama. May I ask what you wish of me?”

—I brought you down here to answer those questions. That was all.

Of course, he could not actually say that. This must be what it must be like for a comedian to deliver his best routine and not receive a single reaction. That was how Ainz felt now.

Sebas was waiting for an answer. However, he had no idea what to say. Just as he was about to reply “that was all”, a ray of light broke through the darkness clouding his heart.

Inspiration flashed through Ainz, and once he composed his thoughts, he spoke.

“—Sebas, I heard you visited this room when I was not in. It must have been an emergency, so I summoned you before me.”

“Ohh, to think Ainz-sama would go to so much trouble for such a small matter. Please accept my sincerest apologies.”

Ainz raised his hand to cut off Sebas, who would have continued apologizing otherwise.

“Well, that’ll do. So, what exactly is the matter?”

“Understood. I came to ask for permission to assign tasks to the maids and the manservants.”

“The Pleiades? As battle maids, they should be much higher-levelled than the manservants. Would it be all right to distribute tasks that way?”

“Ah, no, forgive me for not explaining clearly. The maids I referred to were the regular maids under the charge of Head Maid Pestonya. The tasks of which I spoke were the everyday cleaning on the 9th and 10th floors.”

“Ahh, so that’s what it’s all about...”

Although Ainz was seriously considering the problems, he had no particular plan in mind that he wanted to be carried out.

The guild members who created the maids had thought that “It would be a shame if there were no maids in such a big place like this”. There had been no special significance attached to their creation. The thing was, given the meticulous attention paid to the the maids’ design by Whitebrim-san — a man who had broken into the industry with insert pictures of maids, and who was now a serialized mangaka — it was clear that the maids were very special to him, despite being essentially background extras.

The nostalgic feeling made Ainz smile, and he replied to Sebas.

“Well, the two of you were originally meant to handle those maids. There’s no particular need for me to grant you the

permission to do your jobs...”

Ainz’s voice trailed off halfway. He remembered something he’d read in the two business books from earlier. With a soft cough, Ainz asked a question.

“...No, you’ve come before me for a reason. Though it might be troublesome, would you care to explain the details to me?”

“How could that be troublesome? I simply did not wish to waste Ainz-sama’s time with minor issues... I understand. Then, permit me to explain myself.”

Sebas described how every person had been deployed and the intentions behind doing so.

As Ainz heard him speak, all he could think was “Hmph, is that it...”. However, because his face couldn’t show any change in expression, others would have thought he was paying close attention.

Sebas’ explanation was becoming more and more animated.

If he got that way, it would be difficult to bluff with sound bites like “Is that so” and “Umu”.

Ainz raised his hand, and interrupted Sebas’ monologue.

“Sebas, I understand what you’re trying to say, that we have

very few maids. Even so, isn't it a bit much to give everyone tasks to perform?"

"Yes. It is as you say. However, the maids are all equipped with items that will negate fatigue. Because of that, there will not be any problems no matter how long they work."

"That's not right, Sebas. We must give them free time and the opportunity to rest their minds in order for them to think about how to better perform their tasks. If all that was required were dolls that only knew how to follow commands, then we could use the low-level undead from the first floor and be done with it."

Sebas' eyes went wide.

"Ohh! As expected of Ainz-sama! I see, I was wrong! It is definitely as you say! The maids are specially crafted homunculi. I need to take their wills and personalities into consideration!"

"Ah, no, don't mind it, Sebas. Then, can you continue explaining your plans to me?"

"Understood! I will make use of the solemn advice Ainz-sama has bestowed upon me to utilize their abilities more effectively!"

The explanation continued again.

At times, Ainz would toss out a question, and Sebas would answer. In the end, although Ainz didn't quite understand the details, it seemed as though they had managed to hammer out a deployment plan that met with Sebas' approval.

"Many thanks, Ainz-sama. I can devise a perfect deployment plan now."

"Is that so? Well, since you approve, then there should be no problem. I authorize you and Pestonya to handle this matter. Sebas, you are dismissed."

"Understood."

As Ainz watched the satisfied Sebas leave his office, Ainz grabbed his head as he realized his foolishness.

"He didn't answer my questions at all..."

The reason why he had not achieved his objective was far too obvious. How could he not have noticed such a simple thing?

The answer lay in the circumstances surrounding them.

If the department head of a big company suddenly summoned a worker before him and said, "Tell me about any problems you have", who would actually state their complaints about the company? It was only obvious that they would try to deflect the inquiries or say, "I can't think of any at the moment" to try and bluff their way through.

“I can’t believe I didn’t even think of that; can I really be a good superior? No—”

He roused himself from the slump that he had fallen into.

“—From the start, I knew I wasn’t ready yet. Because of that, I need to work harder to improve myself. This failure will become a learning experience.”

In short, the problem was that he had tried to speak directly to Sebas about the matter.

Ainz considered if he should use ‘Message’ instead. However, he considered that no worker would air their grievances to their boss even over a phone, and thus abandoned that plan.

In the end, he should probably send someone other than himself. Revisiting the previous scenario, the department head might have gotten better results if the worker had been speaking to the secretary instead. The words he wanted to say would have been more naturally spoken to a fellow subordinate rather than to the boss himself.

The question was, who would be Ainz’s substitute?

Several people appeared in his mind, but if they asked him why they had to do this, he would have no choice but to explain himself. Ainz wanted to avoid that as well.

Just as Ainz was starting to get weary of grappling with the thorny path before him, inspiration descended from heaven as he considered his next move.

The brilliance of the idea made Ainz wonder if he had been subjected to a light-element attack.

Ainz pointed to the floor, and used a skill.

What came forth was a Death Knight.

Although using a human corpse would allow the Death Knight to exist indefinitely, this particular task would not need that much time.

“Do you understand what I was thinking about earlier?”

The Death Knight nodded and moaned.

Summoned monsters were granted a portion of their summoners’ thoughts and knowledge, so they could immediately take action according to their master’s will right after being summoned. They could tell friend from foe, of course. Otherwise, there would have been no way the Death Knight in Carne Village could have known Ainz’s full intentions from a few spoken words.

—Although, the fact that he had immediately rushed out was somewhat beyond his expectations.

That was why Ainz had summoned an undead being.

They would act according to Ainz's intentions, even without the need for a full explanation.

In addition, they would not be as intimidating as Ainz when speaking to people.

There were many benefits to this course of action.

"Good. Then go. Report what you have learned from the Guardians of all the floors. Begin with Shalltear. She is the strongest of the Guardians and tasked with the first line of defense against intruders. She is the most important person in Nazarick. We must give priority to any requests for help from her."

He could already sense that the Floor Guardians had a lot of loyalty toward him when he gathered them in the Colosseum, but it wouldn't hurt to improve that relationship even more. In addition, if he had to choose between allocating resources to her or someone else, he should probably arrange to give her priority.

"Then, once you have gotten a clear picture from everyone, return and report to me. The details will be the means of improving the daily operations of Nazarick — they will be useful in future meetings with the Guardians."

The Death Knight roared and rushed out of the room. As Ainz

saw his retreating back, he thought of the scene from Carne Village.

The Death Knight charged as if he wasn't even going to bother opening the door — then at the last moment he ground to a halt, gingerly opened the door to let himself out, and then continued running again.

Alone again, Ainz closed his eyes.

“Death Knight... Death Knight... did I pick the wrong man — no, the wrong undead for the job?”

There were many more human-like beings —if that was the word for it— among the undead creatures he could summon.

As such, he wondered if a different undead creature would have been better.

With that in mind, why had he chosen the Death Knight? He couldn't think of a good reason. In truth, it was probably because he had used one in Carne Village, so the mental image of the Death Knight was more fresh in his head.

Alas, it was too late now.

After the Death Knight came back with word from Shalltear, he would consider if he should use someone else.

“Death Knight, there's nothing to worry about. I put my trust

in you that nothing will go wrong. Since I created you myself, I'm sure you will execute your task without any problems."

As he said those words, Ainz suppressed his uneasiness as he looked in the direction of the Death Knight, who had already left the room. Part of him felt that it was a pretty good line, so he made a mental note of it. It seemed like a line that could be used in front of other people.

"Lines, huh... those might end up being useful in the future. Maybe I should look into them..."

Part 3

The Death Knight ran.

He sprinted at top speed through the 9th floor of the Great Tomb of Nazarick.

In order to swiftly fulfil his master's orders, he ran with a single-minded focus.

The way a creature like himself ran, over two meters tall and sheathed from head to toe in heavy black plate armor, resembled the movement of a giant rolling stone. And then, the seemingly unstoppable charge was halted by a single shout.

“—Hey!”

The voice of a woman came from the side.

While wondering if the shout was directed at him, the Death Knight continued moving for another ten meters.

“Hey! What are you doing? Why are you running so fast? I'll get mad, you know!”

Looking behind, he saw that the speaker was a maid.

He knew she was a regular maid from the knowledge that his

master shared with him.

“This is the 9th floor, the residence of the Supreme Beings! How can you make such a racket? Why are you running here — no, not running — rampaging all over the place!”

The Death Knight pondered her words, and noted that they were true. Although his master ruled this place and had given him a direct order, making so much noise was rude.

As she saw the Death Knight lower his head in apology, the maid nodded in satisfaction.

“Very good. You need to remember, you can run in some places and not in others. Since you apologized, I’ll keep it a secret from your master. You’re lucky you met me. If you met someone stricter, it might be troublesome for your master. Be more careful in future!”

The maid lightly touched her chin with her index finger, and tilted her head.

“Although... I’ve never seen you before... if you’re undead, are you Shalltear-sama’s minion?”

The Death Knight shook his head, and the maid’s expression stiffened. Her face went pale, and sweat started beading on her forehead.

“Then... whose subordinate could you be...”

After the Death Knight told her the name of his owner, the maid's face turned a ghastly white.

"I... I... did I say something wrong? ...Um... then... did Ainz-sama give an urgent order?"

No wonder, the Death Knight thought. To his master, who ruled this place, any and all rules were simply suggestions that he could alter at his whim. In other words, his master made the rules. If the Death Knight were truly on urgent business, the maid's disrespectful actions would have been punished with death at the very least.

As she realised this, signs of fear began appearing on her face.

Still, was that really the case?

It could sense the intentions his master harbored in his heart. However, since his master had not actually spoken those words, it didn't count as an order.

The most important thing was... The Death Knight glanced at the trembling maid from the corner of his eye and thought.

It wasn't just this maid. The Death Knight could feel that his master was revered by every single being here. Just by looking at his master, even a lowly summoned creature like himself was of a higher status than all of them.

The Death Knight explained to the maid that he was not under orders, and that he was simply running in order to quickly fulfil its master's wishes.

The maid blinked, and sighed in relief. The color began returning to her face.

"Haaaa—"

She sagged visibly, like a puppet whose strings had been cut.

"Well, that's great. That's just great..."

She coughed.

"Sorry about that. I can't believe I was so rude to one of Ainz-sama's subordinates. My sincerest apologies."

The Death Knight waved his hand to indicate that he didn't mind. Truthfully speaking, the fault lay with himself for barging through this sanctuary. However, the maid probably wouldn't be able to accept his apology given her circumstances.

It was clearly all right, but the maid had no intention of looking away. It was only natural for inferiors to watch superiors as they left. However, the Death Knight felt itself even more inferior to her, and the weight of her gaze was hard to bear.

They waited for each other to make the first move, warily watching each other, like a duel between two master swordsmen.

Things would be awkward if they stood here looking at each other.

As the one who had caused the two of them to stare at each other in the first place, he should probably make the first move.

The Death Knight moaned and felt the maid's gaze burning into his back as he walked away. He was walking because things would be troublesome if another maid shouted at him to stop running in the hallways. The Death Knight could at least learn that much.

Without further incident, he reached the teleport gate that led to the floors above.

From here, he would pass through the 7th, the 6th, the 5th and the 4th floors, with his final destination being the room of Shalltear Bloodfallen on the second floor. Moving there on foot would take a lot of time, but there was no other way.

The reason why he would not pass through the 8th floor was because entry into it was forbidden. Because of that, a path had been made to skip past it.

Some people might also have wanted to bypass all the floors and go straight to the 2nd floor, but only one person in Nazarick could do that. This person was the Death Knight's creator, Ainz Ooal Gown, the guild leader. Or rather, not even his master could do it without the Ring of Ainz Ooal Gown. It would be impossible for a mere Death Knight like himself.

The Death Knight stepped into the sparkling lights of the teleport gate. Because it was rare to see an undead being use the teleport gate by itself, the Guardian of the Cherry Blossom Sanctuary—who was in charge of the teleport gates—turned her gaze toward him, but she did not send him to the special place, and the Death Knight successfully completed his teleport.

He passed the infernal world of the 7th floor.

He passed the Colosseum on the 6th floor

He passed the frozen wasteland of the 5th floor

He passed the underground lake on the 4th floor.

At last, he reached the place that deserved the name of “tomb”.

The Death Knight exited the teleport gate, into a windowless underground chapel. Maybe it had once been a room that glittered with riches, but now all that was left were moldering bones. The only thing that remained clean was an altar where

a god's statue should have stood. In its place was a flag of Ainz Ooal Gown.

The chapel was about a hundred meters across and completely unlit. If the Death Knight had not been able to see in the dark, he would have been engulfed by a blackness so complete that he would not have been able to see his own hand in front of his face.

Several dozen undead were wandering in the darkness. Since they did not sense any body heat, they showed no hostility.

The Death Knight left the chapel through its sole door and headed outside.

In front of the chapel was an old, derelict rope bridge that was held up by ropes that looked like they were about to break. The boards below his feet were rotten through, and where some knots had come loose, the planks had fallen off, leaving nothing but empty space where they should have been. The bridge swayed gently even without the wind in the air, creaking mournfully.

Below the bridge were the silhouettes of countless corpses. They moaned and raised their arms.

To a human, this would be a sight so terrifying it would root them to the spot. However, to an undead creature like himself, this was nothing to be afraid of. The broken-down exterior was just a facade — in truth, the bridge was very

sturdy. As long as one did not deliberately step onto the missing portions, even a creature with his massive weight could easily cross the bridge.

Paying no heed to the keening of the rotted wood underneath his feet, the Death Knight set forth.

After the bridge, he would be at his objective.

The path ended at an unassuming stone door.

Although it was hard to tell from the outside, this door was the entrance to Shalltear Bloodfallen's private quarters.

The Death Knight knocked on the door. The sound it made was not that of the stone it looked like, but metal. It was a metal door made to resemble a stone one.

After a few moments, he knocked again.

The door opened, and one of Shalltear's servants, a vampire bride, poked her head out.

"Ara, you are...?"

Since he had come up through the teleport gate that led to the lower floors, she could be reasonably certain that he was not an enemy. However, she still gasped as she saw this unfamiliar undead being, since Death Knights did not usually exist in Nazarick.

The automatic spawn system would only produce monsters that were level 30 at most. Death Knights, which were level 35, would not be spawned by that system. In addition, the mercenary system that summoned creatures in exchange for YGGDRASIL currency did not allow for the summoning of Death Knights. Her confusion was understandable.

The Death Knight introduced himself, in order to avoid a situation like the one with the maid from just now, where they ended up staring at each other in surprise or embarrassment.

The vampire bride's eyes went wide as he told her that its master —the absolute ruler of this domain— had sent it here to speak with the ruler of this floor.

“Is, is that the case?! Th-then I apologize for delaying you! Shalltear-sama is bathing now, she'll be— no, it would be rude to make you wait here. Please come in!”

The Death Knight would have been fine waiting outside, but refusing an invitation like this would be disrespectful.

With that, the Death Knight nodded lightly, and entered the room.

A thick, sweet fragrance hung in the air. Although it had no effect on the undead, it could imagine that if the living failed to resist the effect, they would be inflicted with some form of negative status. Thick scents like this, which seemed to soak

into one's skin, were a common trap used in the lairs of the undead.

Gauzy pink chiffon veils hung from the ceiling, obscuring vision. The sound of women laughing and moaning lewdly carried over from the distance. It was completely unlike the rest of the tomb, and he felt as though it had been drawn into another world. Fighting a team battle here would be very troublesome, to say the least.

The erotic atmosphere of the room was shattered by the vampire brides running around frantically. They appeared to be helping Shalltear—who had finished her bath—dress herself.

“Clothes—”

“Dry Shalltear-sama's hair—”

“Ainz-sama's envoy is waiting—”

“Even if he's undead, we should offer him refreshments as a courtesy—”

“Prepare a seat for him first—”

All these words floated over to the Death Knight, accompanied by the sounds of hurried action.

“P-please, come this way.”

Soon, a different vampire bride appeared before him, and brought him to a room with a small white table, set for two.

Each place had porcelain teacups set before it, filled with a bright red fluid, the scent of tea filled the air.

“Shalltear-sama will be here shortly; please wait for a moment.”

After bowing, the vampire bride left.

The Death Knight sat down, worried that the delicate legs of his chair would not be able to bear his mighty weight. Though tea had been freshly brewed for him, he left the cup untouched and waited. He would not suffer any ill effects if he drank the tea, but if he did, it might leak out from his body and onto the floor. He did not want to dirty someone else's room.

After several minutes, Shalltear emerged, flanked by two vampire brides. It seemed as though even this hasty entrance had been quite rushed, given the fact that her long hair was not fully dried and it was left hanging behind her, instead of being pinned up.

The Death Knight rose from his place to welcome Shalltear. Her eyes went wide, and then she silently fell to one knee.

“The Floor Guardian Shalltear Bloodfallen presents herself. I

apologize for the delay in my appearance, oh messenger of Ainz-sama.”

As Shalltear greeted him without concern for her station, the Death Knight expressed his hope that she would not adopt that attitude. It was he who should be bending his knee to her.

“But, I could not possibly show disrespect to an envoy of Ainz-sama.”

Upon hearing Shalltear’s denial, the Death Knight pleaded with her not to stand on ceremony once more. However, Shalltear did not seem able to accept that fact. As he surmised, she probably thought that any rudeness to Ainz’s messenger would be rudeness to Ainz himself.

After several rounds of this back and forth, the two of them finally came to a compromise. In a show of mutual respect, they would speak casually to each other.

A smile came to both their faces as they reached an accord.

“Then, can you tell me what you need? I haven’t received a message by envoy rather than by magic since Albedo ordered us to gather in the colosseum. It must be an important matter, so I hope you will let me hear it even in this shabby room.”

Shalltear looked at the vampire brides she had brought along.

It seemed like this was a confidential matter.

As the Death Knight confirmed that this was to be kept secret, Shalltear gestured with her chin in the direction of the door. The vampire brides nodded and quietly left the room.

“Then... let’s sit down and talk.”

Although both of them were undead and did not have to worry about fatigue, it seemed quite silly for both of them to be standing, especially when drinks had been prepared.

The two of them matched their timing and sat down in unison.

Their eyes met for a moment, and then Shalltear spoke in a low voice.

“Then, can you tell me?”

Her voice was filled with excitement and anticipation. Shalltear must have felt that the Death Knight was going to entrust her with some clandestine mission that could only be accomplished by the Floor Guardian Shalltear Bloodfallen. The building heat of her excitement felt like a physical pressure — or not.

According to his master, the first thing he should ask the Guardians was “Are you feeling alright?”

After he said that, Shalltear blinked in surprise, then wobbled from side to side while thinking about the question. Finally, as though admitting defeat, she spoke up.

“Is there any particular reason for that question? Has something unusual happened?”

Maintaining one’s health was important, so his master felt that asking about their health would lighten the mood. After all, when doing business, one needed to find common ground after clearing the air.

Although he had asked the question with that intention, the result had been the opposite of what he had predicted. Shalltear’s eyes went wide at the unexpected question.

“As Ainz-sama surely knows, as an undead being, I am immune to most status effects and am thus in good health. Even so, I know that some special effects can affect the undead. Has one of those effects turned up?”

The undead were completely immune to sleep, poison, disease and other effects which affected a living creature’s metabolism. However, some enemies’ attacks could bypass those resistances.

Those attacks usually belonged to World-Class enemies.

For instance, the Five Rainbow Buddhas’ ‘Five Celestial Death

Throes', the 'Corpse Venom Breath' exhaled by one of the Eight Dragons, or the 'Seven Deadly Sins' of the Lords of the Seven Sins.

Even if 30 level 100 players, fully prepared and forewarned of the battle ahead, did battle with one of these World-Class enemies, the outcome of the battle would still be in doubt. If one of these had appeared before them, it would be a threat to all of Nazarick.

The Death Knight shook its head. Nothing like that had occurred, and besides, if something like that had happened, there was no way Shalltear would not be informed.

"...So it's like that... Although it's a question from Ainz-sama... it's totally not what I expected."

After that, the Death Knight said that it would ask the other Guardians the same question.

"I see, I get it now. Although I don't think the other Guardians would do anything that negatively impacted their health, does someone like that exist? ...No, that's not correct."

Shalltear denied her own opinion as she was speaking it.

"There's no way Ainz-sama could not have noticed anything like that. Because he assumed that we would make thorough preparations, he merely asked that question to keep us on our toes. As expected of Ainz-sama, our lord who could never

be associated with the word ‘carelessness’.”

Although he wasn’t sure if that was what his master really meant, the Death Knight agreed that it was the truth.

“Then... Is the reason you came to me first because I am the furthest away from Ainz-sama? Was it purely a matter of distance?”

It wasn’t like that.

The Death Knight told her what his master had said, that “Shalltear is a very important person.”

The mood changed in an instant.

Something that felt like hot air roiled in front of him.

There was no change in Shalltear — no. Her crimson pupils glowed like lava.

“—Forgive me. I must have gone deaf for a moment, so I didn’t hear what you said just now. Do forgive me. Could you please tell me what Ainz-sama said, one more time?”

It was hard to believe that undead, with their immunity to biological status effects, could go deaf. But he had no reason to deny Shalltear’s request.

So, he repeated himself.

The corner of Shalltear's mouth turned up.

“—Ha! Hahaha! Ahhh, if only Albedo was here to listen to this! Hahaha!”

After having a good laugh, Shalltear continued asking the Death Knight other questions.

“Did Ainz-sama say anything about Albedo?”

After hearing that Ainz hadn't mentioned anything, Shalltear was all smiles.

“So it is, so it is. That's really... Come, messenger-dono, can you tell me his next question?”

The next question was, “Is there anything bothering you?”

“About this...”

Shalltear furrowed her brow and placed her finger on her lip while looking at the ceiling.

Several seconds later, she looked back to the Death Knight.

“Nothing's really bothering me.”

As she saw the Death Knight nod, suspicion and doubt drove Shalltear to speak.

“Did I answer wrongly? Did I misunderstand Ainz-sama's true

intentions?”

Conversations were like passing in basketball. If the exchange ended after only a couple of rounds, something was wrong.

The Death Knight had grasped his master's thoughts upon creation, but even then, it was only a rough guess of his intentions and not a complete understanding. Therefore he had nothing to say to put Shalltear at ease.

Seeing Shalltear's discomfort, the Death Knight asked the final question, “What do you want?”

Shalltear's smile was bewitchingly beautiful as she made her reply.

“I want Ainz-sama's love. I don't mean to say it only has to be me. After all, it's normal for a great man to claim many women for himself. It would be surprising if any woman could resist an absolutely amazing man like Ainz-sama. However, I want to be the first in his heart.”



The Death Knight left the room and headed back to the teleport gate in order to return to the 9th floor. From this end, he would have to go past every floor in order to return to his master's side, but as an undead, he would not feel fatigued in body or mind, so this long walk was not a problem.

Suddenly, his master's orders rang through his mind. A summoned creature had a mental link with its master, so even without 'Message' they could receive orders and transmit thoughts in general.

It obeyed its orders, and halted.

There was clearly nobody else on this path, yet he could see the shape of his master materializing out of thin air. He must have used invisibility-type magic to secretly get close.

“Although I told you to come back, that would probably be a waste of time. While it doesn't matter how many times you go back and forth, I should still make good use of my time.

「Repel Undeath」.”

Ainz cast a spell that created a barrier to ward off low-level undead. Normally, the Death Knight would have been affected as well, but because he was under his master's direct control, he did not shy away from Ainz.

“That'll do. Now, tell me what Shalltear said.”

The Death Knight nodded and swiftly began his report. He began with the health question.

After listening, Ainz looked up.

“Well, that's true. Asking about Shalltear's health was pointless since she's undead. No... it should be the same with

the other Guardians. None of them would fail to protect themselves against disease or poison. What a useless question. Well, it was meant to lighten the mood anyway, so it doesn't matter. Now, tell me about the next question."

As he heard the answer, Ainz furrowed his nonexistent brows.

"That's all? Was she just being polite?"

The Death Knight shook his head.

"No? No... does that mean she took the wrong meaning away from that question? We've only been here a while, so they probably wouldn't have discovered any problems yet. I'll ask something else."

Ainz thought for a while, and then spoke to the Death Knight.

"Let's amend the second question... Next time... hm, what should I ask. Do you have any ideas?"

The Death Knight groaned in confusion. It couldn't give him any good ideas even if asked.

"Ah, yes, that's right. Sorry. I think I'll look at the bible, then."

Ainz withdrew a book from thin air and flipped through it, stopping at a specific page.

"...I see. Got it, that's what I'll do. 'Interpersonal

relationships. Who are you closest to and who are you least close to'. Is there a more important question than this?"

The crimson light in his owner's eyes glowed brighter.

"Interpersonal relationships are important. Even in unethical companies, if one's relationships are good, they may be able to survive regardless. And in ethical companies, poor interpersonal relationships have been the cause of many resignations. The same applies to Ainz Ooal Gown."

He wasn't addressing this to the Death Knight. It seemed like he was talking for his own benefit.

Ainz's voice became softer and softer, until the point where it couldn't be heard. The fire in his eyes shifted, as though looking into the distance.

"Right, interpersonal relationships. The relationships between the Floor Guardians is very important. Can you do that, Death Knight? From the next round onwards, ask about that instead. ...Very well. Then let me hear the answer to the last question."

As he heard Shalltear's answer, Ainz sagged like a puppet whose strings had been cut.

He addressed the Death Knight.

"...*Besides* Ainz. Append that to the last question the next

time you ask it. Understood?"

Part 4

Freezing cold air blew from all sides. Normally there would be a cold-based damage-over-time field effect here, but with that deactivated, it was just very cold. Still, the Death Knight would have been fine even if the field effect had not been shut down.

This was because most undead were immune to cold, but weak to fire. Because of that, no matter how cold the temperature got, the undead would not be affected, and since they ignored all metabolism-related status effects, they could function perfectly well in high-temperature areas, although they would take extra damage from fire-elemental attacks.

By the way, Death Knights were completely immune to cold, yet not weak to fire.

The only thing slowing his footsteps was the snow.

Wearing full plate armor would slow him down, and it caused his entire leg to sink deeply into the snow. If he was not undead, he would have succumbed to fatigue long ago.

After some time, the Death Knight finally found the large snow globe where Cocytus lived.

Six crystalline icicles rose from the ground around the snow

globe.

The Death Knight continued advancing, and suddenly Cocytus' body appeared at the snow globe's entrance. Their eyes met.

"A. Guest...? Were. You. The. One. Who. Activated. The. Gate? I. Received. A. Report. That. An. Undead. Creature. Of. Nazarick. Was. Passing. Through. But. You. Do. Not. Look. Familiar."

Once the Death Knight said he was summoned by Ainz, Cocytus' insectile face took on a look of surprise. No, the clacking of his huge lower mandibles was a sign of shock. That was probably a more accurate answer.

"Ohhhh! I. I. Have. Not. Shown. The. Proper. Respect. To. Think. You. Were. Ainz-sama's. Messenger!"

The Death Knight motioned to stop Cocytus from kneeling, and told him about the events from Shalltear's room.

However, it would be difficult to let the other party understand that he was an inferior, so he decided to start by having them address each other as equals first.

"I see. So. You. Were. At. Shalltear's. Place. As. Well... I. Understand. Then. Let. Us. Proceed."

Was it because of his nature as a warrior? Or because he was

a man? Either way, he seemed to accept it much faster than Shalltear.

“This is. Not. A. Place. To. Entertain. Guests. Especially. Ainz-sama’s. Messenger. If. You. Don’t Mind. Would. You. Like. To. Come. Into. My. Home?”

The Death Knight’s body was unaffected by fatigue, so standing here would have been fine. However, he had no reason to refuse the offer. Also, like Cocytus said, the respect he was showing was not simply because of his master. Refusing the invitation would reflect badly on both of them.

He followed Cocytus into the big snow globe.

The walls, ceiling and furniture seemed to be made out of ice. This was probably an artistic decision. Aside from that, it wasn’t much different from a regular home.

However, it was big. It was big enough that Cocytus could swing his swords without a problem anywhere in the interior. It was probably designed with indoor fighting in mind.

They came to what looked like a conference room.

The Death Knight refused the offer of beverages. They had already been prepared for him on Shalltear’s side, but he felt bad about making people prepare them specially for him.

“Forgive. Me. For. Rushing. You. But. Can. You. Let. Me. Hear.

The. Questions? “

Cocytus spoke from his place opposite the Death Knight at the table.

“Ainz-sama. Did Not. Use ‘Message’. But. Sent. An. Undead. Messenger. This. Must be. Very. Important. What is. The matter?”

The Death Knight understood that his master wanted him to open with “Sorry, this isn’t important”, but he also understood that to the Guardians, everything concerning Ainz-sama was an important matter. Still, he knew that that was not what his master wanted.

“What. Do you. Mean. By ‘Isn’t. Important.’ Ainz-sama. Is. The. One. Who. Gathered. The. Supreme Beings. Who. Made. This. Land. And. Everything. On. It. What. Could. Be. More. Important. Than. His. Words? There. Must. Be. A. Limit. To. Modesty. Even. For. You.”

Cocytus’ words resonated strongly with the Death Knight, and he nodded deeply in agreement.

The two of them exchanged glances again. Their eyes met for a moment—a vanishingly short time— but that was enough. The communication they exchanged through their souls did not need such crude things as words.

The two rose from their seats, and reflexively extended their

hands, shaking them rightly.

As warriors who believed strongly in loyalty, honesty and earnest service, they saw kindred spirits in each other.

“—Pleased. To. Meet. You.”

The Death Knight roared softly in agreement.

Reluctantly, each unwilling to be the first one to release their grip, the two sat back down.

“Then. We. Should. Move on. To. The. Main. Topic. What. Did. Ainz-sama. Say?”

The Death Knight asked Cocytus about his interpersonal relationships; about the people he was closest to and least close to.

Cocytus blinked — an impressive feat considering he had compound eyes.

“Closest. To. And. Least. Close. To... A. Difficult. Question.”

Cocytus folded two of his four arms.

“By. Close. Do you. Mean. The. Ones. I am. Friendliest. With? Or. Something. Else.”

The Death Knight indicated that it was the former. As Cocytus fell into thought, he roared.

“If. I knew. Ainz-sama’s. True. Intentions. I. Could. Give. A. Better. Answer. If. You. Mean. The. Floor Guardians. I am. On. Good. Terms. With. That. Would be. Demiurge. If. That. Includes. All. The. Guardians. That. Would. Also. Include. Kyouhukou. And. I. Also. Maintain. Ties. With. Grant. And. Gashokukochuuu.”

The Death Knight nodded in understanding, and waited for the next answer.

Cocytus thought for a while, and then shook his head.

“When. I think. About. It. There is. Nobody. Among. The. Creations. Of. The. Supreme Beings. Whom I. Do not. Get along. With. However. For. The. Most. Part I. Only. Speak. With them. And. I. Have not. Met them. Face. To. Face. Like. I. Have. With. The. Area. Guardians. With. Ainz-sama’s. Permission. I would. Like to. Make. Time. To. Visit them. And. Deepen. Our. Friendship.”

The Death Knight promised that he would pass that message along. Considering their earlier encounter, there was a high chance he would meet his master outside, as he left the snow globe. He might be able to fulfil his promise to Cocytus sooner than expected.

“Also. Although. This. Is not. Related. To the. Topic. I. Would. Like. To. Request. A. Chance. To. Spar. With. Sebas. And. Albedo. Live. Combat. Practice — Especially. With. Strong.

Fighters — Will. Surely. Be. A. Boon. To. Ainz-sama.”

This sounded just like a suggestion one would expect of an artist dedicated to perfecting his craft. The Death Knight could understand where Cocytus was coming from and would relay his wishes to his master.

Next, the Death Knight asked his question. “What do you want... besides Ainz-sama.”

Cocytus seemed to grin at the addition.

“...I. See. Someone. Asked. For. That. It. Must. Have been. Albedo. Or. Shalltear.”

In order to protect Shalltear’s reputation, the deathknight held his peace.

“Although. I Do not. Know. Which. Of. Them. Said. It. If. That. Sort. Of. Answer. Is. Allowed. Then. I. Shall. Respond. In. Kind. I. Want. An. Heir. For. Ainz-sama.”

Cocytus raised a hand to halt the Death Knight, indicating he wished to continue.

“I. Know. This. Is. A. Disrespectful. Request. Of. Ainz-sama. However. I. Feel. We. Need. An. Heir. For. The. Continued. Ruling. Of. Nazarick. Without. An. Heir. I. Cannot. Feel. Secure. For. The. Future. As. Long. As. It. Is. An. Order. We. Guardians. Will. Obey. Even. If. The. Giver. Is. A. Successor. From. The.

Outside. However. Without. The. Bloodline. Of. Our. Lord. We. Will. Clash. Emotionally. And. Ideologically. But. If. Ainz-sama. Has. An. Heir. We. Guardians. Will. Gladly. Serve. Him.”

The Death Knight could not say anything to Cocytus, who was standing with his chest puffed up. This was a feeling that he, who was created to obey his maker, could not understand.

“Ahh... An. Heir... My. Blood. Is. Boiling...”

Cocytus seemed to be thinking about something strange.

Eventually, he nodded in satisfaction.

“...Ainz-sama’s. Heir. Will. Surely. Be. An. Outstanding. Magic. Caster. That. Being. The. Case. I. Will. Have. No. Chance. To. Teach. Him. Swordsmanship. As. Expected. His. Mother. Should. Be. A. Warrior. ...No. That. Is. Wrong. Because. He. Is. A. Magic. Caster. He. Will. Need. A. Skilled. Warrior. To. Guard. His. Body. Therefore. I. Will. Take. Charge. Of. That. Task. I. Will. Teach. Him. How. To. Deal. With. Melee. Attackers. —No. With. Me. Around. Nobody. Will. Be. Able. To. Get. Close. Enough. To. Threaten. Him.”

Cocytus’s compound eyes seemed to be watching a beautiful vista that only he could see.

“Ohhh... That. Is. Correct. I. Am. Very. Strong. I. Will. Not. Let. Weak. Enemies. Like. That. Near. The. Young. Master. Hmph. Come. If. You. Are. Not. Afraid. Of. Death.!”

Cocytus' vast arms were moving as he slaughtered phantom enemies in their droves.

He only came back to his senses when the Death Knight thanked him for his time.

"...Cough! Ahem. Then... I. Believe. This. Is. Important. Please. Inform. Ainz-sama. About. The. Matter. Of. The. Succession."



As the Death Knight left the snow globe and entered a world of driving snow, his master's words echoed in his mind, as he had expected.

The Death Knight lengthened his strides in compliance with the order. No, because there was a long distance between his current location and the indicated location, he would need to move fast in order to avoid wasting Ainz's time. With a mighty roar, the Death Knight broke into a sprint. He churned the snow aside as he ran, heading toward his master as fast as he could.

Just as he reached the assigned spot and began looking around, a shape of jet-black corrupted the pure white world. Or rather, because the Death Knight was also a black-colored figure, it might be better to say that the blackness of the world intensified.

“Sorry for making you rush, and try not to make so much noise, it attracts attention.”

Upon hearing his master’s first words, the Death Knight hurriedly shut his mouth.

“Cocytus’s quarters are surrounded by subordinates called Frost Virgins, and they have the ability to see through invisibility, so I couldn’t wait there. Ahhh, that was really risky. All right, let me hear your report, then.”

The Death Knight began explaining, and Ainz nodded his head magnanimously as he listened.

“I see. Well, I see the similarities between Cocytus and Demiurge, and how they might get along. As for why Entoma was not included... it’s probably because Sebas’ maids do not work in the same place as him. Although, Grant, Kyouhukou and Gashokukochuuu are on different floors as well... well, no point worrying too much about it.”

After acknowledging that his master understood, the Death Knight continued by speaking about the somewhat unrelated request. Ainz nodded in approval several times as he listened.

“Even among the Guardians of Nazarick, those three can be considered the top among the warrior classes. Cocytus has the advantage against Albedo, but not against Sebas. Sebas

is strong against Cocytus, but not against Albedo. Albedo can probably win against Sebas, but not against Cocytus. And his request for training truly reflects Cocytus' personality...

Though, can we really become stronger? If they are strong because their data says they are, doesn't that mean their limits are also decided by their data?"

His master fell into silence and looked at his hands. The Death Knight sensed that those words were not directed at him, so he kept quiet and remained still.

"These hands can carry, but not wield a greatsword. Does that not illustrate my point? If their limits are already decided, we must be more careful, because we do not know where the danger lies."

The Death Knight did not know how to help with his master's uneasiness, and remained silent for the time being. Of course, his master did not expect the Death Knight to say anything.

Ainz's line of sight shifted, and rested on the Death Knight.

"If I could, I would like to get a naturally-spawned Death Knight from somewhere and train it with a summoned Death Knight, to see if there's a difference in the outcome... Ah, do wild Death Knights even exist? If they did, I could investigate a lot of things, although... As I thought, gaining this information is vital. Ah, my apologies. Let's get back on track. What about the next question?"

As the Death Knight mentioned the matter of Ainz's child, confusion bloomed on his master's face.

"...Eh? What was that?"

The Death Knight assumed he was being asked to repeat himself, so he did.

"Children..."

Ainz looked at his waist and tilted his head.

"How does he expect me to make a child? Birth one by magic? Maybe super-tier spells might be able to do it..."

The Death Knight watched as his master grabbed his head, unable to help him.

"No, that would be too much of a waste, so it's out of the question. Children... Well, for now, there's no need to worry about that. Although, he's worried about there being nobody left...huh. Well, I certainly understand that feeling. I really do. If someone else had stayed behind... well, things would have been different."

Those words were not directed at the Death Knight. He could see that his master was looking into the distance, into a different place, at a different time. Ainz shook his head, and looked back to the Death Knight.

“All right. In the future, ask them not to ask about anything related to me at all.”

The Death Knight nodded deeply, in acknowledgement.

“Then, next up will be the dark elf twins. Since there’s two of them, you may not have as much time as you need to ask them the questions, but I think it’ll be fine. I’ll leave it to you.”

As he watched his master leave with the power of the ring, the Death Knight roared, and began heading for the next floor.

Part 5

After the frozen world of ice, he came to a great forest.

After walking along the stone-paved road and exiting the Colosseum, a vast expanse of green stretched before his eyes with seemingly no limit.

The humidity and the temperature of the surrounding air was very conducive for life, and anyone here would be able to smell the signs of nature and the abundant oxygen in the air. Of course, as an undead Death Knight, he did not need to breathe, so all he knew about this place was what his master had granted him.

The Death Knight strode toward the most distinctive tree in the vicinity.

It was a gigantic tree.

Its width was more eye-catching than its height, and one could describe it as a short, fat tree.

Just as he came to the base of the giant tree, a child's high-pitched voice came from above.

“Oi~ Death Knight, over here~”

Looking up, he saw the form of Aura, one of this floor's

guardians, more than 20 meters above him. She was dangling upside-down from one of the branches, supporting herself with the crooks of her knees, so she looked like a bat. Her hair was pulled straight down by gravity, exposing her forehead.

“So the one who activated that teleport gate was...?”

The Death Knight indicated to Aura that he was the one in question.

“Down to up and up to down. A total of two times. Was that you?”

The Death Knight was confident of that, and Aura revealed an expression of deep thought, pursing her small lips like a duck.

“Hm-mm. Death Knight... does Shalltear have one of those under her? ...Or if it's not Shalltear... Ohhhhh! All right~”

Aura swung her upper body and used the momentum to somersault on top of the branch, where she sat down. Since she wasn't wearing her shoes, he could see her little toes.

“Then, why did you come here... what do you want?”

The Death Knight explained to Aura that he was here on his master's orders to ask several questions. Surprised, Aura lost her balance.

Although a fall from this height would not harm Aura, the Death Knight decided to play it safe and extended his arms to catch her, but then he realized that his body was covered in spikes. If he waited under her with these things sticking out of him, it would only make things worse. Still, he felt bad about not being able to do anything.

This was a common phenomenon with summoned monsters; if they had orders, they could act swiftly, but without orders, their actions would be slow and conflicted. If they were more intelligent, they could take unusual actions in response to setbacks, but unfortunately, the Death Knight was not that smart.

While the Death Knight was still confused about what to do, Aura had already regained her balance.

“Aiyaya, that was dangerous~ So you’re from Ainz-sama, then? As expected! Just, uh, w-wait a little.”

Aura stood up on the branch and leapt upwards. She pushed off several branches like she was a stone skipping across water, moving quickly and easily through the branches of the giant tree.

After a while, having travelled about 20 meters vertically upwards, she vanished into the side of the tree, as if she had been sucked in. There must have been a hidden door there, which allowed her access into the interior of the trunk.

The Death Knight strained his ears to listen, and from the air came something like a roar from Aura.

“Mare! We have a guest! It’s a messenger from Ainz-sama! Look at you, you’re a mess, clean yourself up!”

Shortly after that, part of the tree opened out like a window. In truth, it *was* a window. Because of that, he could hear another, softer child’s voice, which was definitely not Aura’s.

“I-I got it...I’ll get ready soon, so Nee-san, you go first...”

“If you try and sleep again I’ll smack you!”

“Y-yes...”

The loud *pang* sound that rang out made the Death Knight wonder if someone hated the door to slam it so hard. It was followed by the sound of someone running down a staircase.

Shortly after that, there was another *pang* sound as another door opened.

“Sorry for the wait!”

Part of the tree trunk swung open, in the shape of a door.

As the Death Knight peered inside, he saw that the interior of the giant tree was hollow. There was a big pillar in the center, with a spiral staircase coiled around it. It extended up to the place where the dark elf twins lived.

“Well, the dimensions of the interior are already set and they can’t be changed, so could you put this on?”

Some dungeons were designed to allow anyone to enter, so their doors and interiors would expand to accommodate tall and bulky people. This way, they could hold big monsters and remove the chance of said monsters being stuck behind terrain and slowly chipped to death from a distance. Some designers also used that principle to stick several giants into a cramped room as a joke, but the Death Knight and this place’s owners knew nothing about it.

And of course, some people were enamored of the benefits of growing bigger — their attack radius would increase and the amount of damage dealt would increase depending on how much larger one was than one’s opponent.

In response to this reasonable concern, the developers’ response was to prohibit the scaling of the dungeon according to the monsters’ size, so even if one entered a room while enlarged, the room would stay the same size.

However, with these rules in mind, one could make passages that nobody could pass through, creating impregnable strongpoints for a guild base. The dungeon rule system ‘Ariadne’ was hard-pressed to deal with situations like that.

The solution was simple — equip an item that would allow anyone to go through those passages.

One of these items was currently on the finger of the Death Knight, whose body slowly shrank down. It was like the temporary class that could be purchased from the cash shop, Minimum, and now he was only a head taller than the dark elves beside him.

“Then, can you come with me?”

The Death Knight already told Aura that he hoped to be able to converse with her on equal terms. As one of the Floor Guardians, she had taken a while to accept the request, but after blinking a few times, she said, “Got it”.

“Mmm — then we’ll try to do it this way. And you don’t need to use fancy address either.”

The Death Knight followed Aura up the spiral staircase.

At the top of the stairs was the place where the two of them usually lived.

It was a cozy home filled with wooden furniture. The walls were not painted or wallpapered, but made entirely out of natural wood, which adorned the ceilings and floors as well. It conveyed a sense of peace and ease. Although it was not obvious at first sight from the exterior, the rooms were fitted with carefully camouflaged windows that let the warm sunlight in to light up the interior.

Beyond the stairs was the living room, the kitchen, the passages to various rooms, the spiral staircase that continued up, and the door which led outside, which Aura had used to enter this place.

“See anything you like? Or have you not seen this sort of thing before?”

The Death Knight indicated that the latter was the case, and Aura nodded while saying, “Is it~”

“Then let me give you a brief tour of the place. Our home is... well, if you consider this the first floor, then we have three floors here. The second floor has our rooms and some other rooms, and the third floor is where the guest rooms and the balcony is. This floor has the kitchen, bathroom, toilets, and so on, so basically we live on the first and second floor. Thing is, although my room’s on the second floor, I tend to spend my time outside rather than inside this tree. I mean, rather than sleeping on the bed, I’d rather summon one of my pets and sleep with them. It feels great when their pelts are prickly. So usually, the only one in the tree is... why isn’t he here yet?!”

Aura sighed.

“Could you take a seat over there? Looks like Mare isn’t ready yet, I tell you, that kid is...”

After the Death Knight asked what the matter was, Aura sat

down and her face revealed hints of frustration.

“That kid... when he’s got nothing to do, he’ll just sleep and sleep and sleep, oh, and he’ll lower the temperature in his room all the way down, and then hide inside his quilt and not move at all. When it’s my turn to stand watch, he’ll just sleep inside his room all day! His idea of waking up early is noon, and he does the same thing during jungle patrol, although there’s something to be said about walking in the jungle after the sun goes down... isn’t he here yet? I’ll go give him a good one—”

Just as Aura said that, the sound of a door opening came from above, followed by the sound of soft footsteps.

Mare had finally shown himself. He still had bed head and his eyes were only half open. The corners of Aura’s eyes rose up even higher.

“I-I-I’m really sorry for being late...”

The Death Knight responded that this was unavoidable when he had not given any prior notice and come by on his own accord.

“B-but, I-I kept Ainz-sama’s messenger waiting... that... th-”

“...Haa. Mare. He’s already said it’s fine. Rather than waste his time, go sit down over there.”

“Uuu... mm.”

After Mare sat down, the Death Knight politely refused drinks before explaining that he was here to ask several questions on the behalf of his master.

The two of them immediately adopted serious expressions, their long ears slowly twitching. Seeing as the two of them were determined not to miss a single word, the Death Knight asked his question.

“...Eh?”

“...Eh?”

The boy and the girl’s voices overlapped. It seemed as though the question had come as a surprise. Or rather, it was a surprise.

The Death Knight nodded in response to Aura’s doubtful query.

“Is, is, is that so? Th-then, Nee-san... about that...”

“Mhm. Since it’s Ainz-sama, he must have some big plan in mind. Who knows, he might be planning some big scale rearrangement or something. Ah, I’ll answer the question first. Let’s see, besides Mare, then... hmm, if you don’t count Mare, then my beasts don’t count either. That leaves Albedo and... Shalltear, I guess.”

“Th-that, about that, I-I don’t, h-have any...”

“Ah, well, Mare likes to hide in his room to read books. Why don’t you go out and get some sun?”

“I-I don’t really like moving around... so. That... and... and I like being in my room...”

“Look at him, it’s hard to believe he’s the number two among the Guardians, right?”

Every Floor Guardian had their specialty.

Among them, Shalltear was considered the strongest for her overall abilities.

In the 2nd place was Mare Bello Fiore, who excelled in devastating area attacks.

The 3rd place belonged to Cocytus for his skill and ability with weapons, followed by Sebas who excelled in hand-to-hand combat, and then Albedo, who boasted the strongest defense.

Similarly, in 6th place was Aura Bella Fiora, who was the strongest in group battles, and then Demiurge in his third form —the most wicked Form of the Devil in Ainz Ooal Gown — which was the strongest in a manly sense.

At the bottom of the heap was Victim. Regretfully, he could

not be considered the strongest in any field, although if pressed, one could say he was the best at delaying the enemy.

In the whole of Nazarick, the only two who might have more than even odds of beating Mare were Shalltear Bloodfallen and Albedo. Still, even his twin sister would grab her head in annoyance when she saw the discrepancy between his strength—which was ranked second among the Guardians—and his pitiful demeanor. To the Death Knight, because he was undead and would not be affected by emotions, he was able to calmly evaluate the situation, which could be considered a relief of sorts.

“In any case, go out and make some friends!”

“Eh, but, but how do I make friends?”

“You don’t need to think so much about that sort of thing. Go bug some people, sit down with them, and eventually they won’t be able to stand the silence and start talking. Then you let the situation develop and now you’ve got a friend!”

“Ehhh—”

“Like I said, all you need to do is say hi to them. After that, they’ll start talking to you. Besides, only a really extroverted guy could engage a whole bunch of people at once, so I won’t tell you to do that. And when you’re in Nazarick, you can meet people anytime you want, right?”

In response to Mare's "Uuu, uu, alright—", Aura took on a solemn expression and nodded with a "Hmph".

"Ah, um. Well, do let Ainz-sama know. Mare will work hard to make friends from this day forth, so you don't need to worry about that either. Ahhh, start with the Librarian, at least the two of you'll have similar interests."

"Ah, uuu, um...If it's Librarian-san, it should be all right, right?"

The Death Knight promised that he would pass on the message.

"Although you don't have a lot of people you're close to now, it'll get better as time goes by. Right, Mare?"

The Death Knight agreed as he saw her brother's head nodding at high speed.

"Then, then, about, about the next question, it's the last one, right? Only two, right? Then, then, could, could there be something we haven't done yet?"

"It's because Mare doesn't have anyone he's close to, right?"

The Death Knight reassured the two of them by saying that he had only asked the other Guardians the same questions.

After he made sure that they understood, the Death Knight

continued asking.

“What I want? Well, I want a new magical beast! I promise I’ll take care of it!”

“...Nee, nee-san, I think, I think he means in terms of what we need to protect this floor...”

Before the Death Knight could interrupt, Aura retorted, with a red face.

“I know that! That’s why I asked for a new magical beast, there’s nothing wrong with that, right? I can tighten up security even more that way!”

“Ah, uu, um. Th-that’s true. S-sorry.”

“And if I can, I’d like to ask for a magical beast that can fly. Speaking of which, Mare, how about you? What do you want?”

“Ah, that, er, about that, I... I’ll be happy with some plant monsters. I’ll take care of them and keep them from withering.”

“See, isn’t that about the same?”

“Uuu, but, but apart from that, it can protect the floor too...”

“Like I said, they’re about the same, right? Maybe after a while you’ll think of something different, but right now,

they're the same, right?"

"Mm, yeah, I guess it's like that..."

The two of them seemed to be conversing in a way only they could understand. Since there was not much else the Death Knight could say at this point, that meant his work here was done.

The Death Knight let them both know he was leaving, and rose from his seat. The two of them stood up to send him off.

He followed the twins down to the bottom of the stairs, and returned his ring once he was outside.

The Death Knight waved goodbye to the twins who were waving at him and headed for the Colosseum. That was where the teleport gate to the 7th floor was.

Before he could enter, his master spoke into his mind again.

As he charged toward one of the chambers in the arena, he saw his master leaning against a wall and reading a book.

"—Good timing."

Ainz closed the book and returned it into his pocket space before nodding.

"No need for greetings. Tell me what you've learned."
Since this was the third time he had done this, the Death

Knight had learned how to summarize his reports.

“I see. For Aura it’s Albedo and Shalltear, is it? They’re all Guardians, after all. But why not mention Yuri Alpha, or Pestonya Shortcake Wanko, or Eclair Egglair Egglayer?”

The Death Knight shook his head.

“...Is that so. I thought they would get along because they were all NPCs made by women... well, I understand about Shalltear at least. After all, Peroroncino-san made her. Albedo however... if the relationship only started when we came to this world, then if we don’t keep an eye on their relationship, it might self-destruct from within, right?”

The Death Knight quietly watched his master, who was covering his mouth with his hand.

He could hear fragments of speech coming from the other side of the hand.

But in the end, all he could make out was “They’ve only been dumped in this New World for a while, there’s no point thinking too hard about it when it won’t give any answers. Because of that, I need to keep that in mind and be aware of it”.

So in a sense, he was just kicking a can down the road.

After being pressed to talk about Mare, the Death Knight

gave his answer, and Ainz muttered “I see.”

“Well, since Mare’s on the move, there’s no need to say too much. Besides, there’s no need for someone who likes to be alone to be forced to go out and mix with other people. In the first place, it was just to see who was under too much stress. If it backfired and stressed him out instead, that would be putting the cart before the horse. Well, I’ll keep an eye on it and who knows, it might be better if I trigger any incidents before they build up... maybe I should talk to the Chief Librarian before Mare goes to speak with him. It might help.

Finally, as Ainz heard the desires of the twins, he kept repeating, “Isn’t that wonderful?”

“That’s what I wanted to hear. I see, new magical beasts it is. And they can even be used to strengthen Nazarick, not bad. Well, Mare’s the same as well, so, I can rest easy thinking about these two. After this is Demiurge. Remember not to say unnecessary things, and I’ll leave it to you.”

The Death Knight bowed to Ainz as he teleported away, then carried on to the next floor.

Part 6

It was a world whose air seemed aglow with red light.

Crimson lava flowed like river, with numerous bubbles in these currents bursting as they reached the surface.

There should have been a fire-elemental damage field effect in place here, but since that effect had been temporarily suspended, the area was merely hot instead. However, despite the word “merely”, this was not a place where the living could easily survive. The scorching air would easily strip throats and skin of their moisture in seconds.

Even freshly beaded sweat would instantly vaporize into steam, causing a steady accumulation of fatigue.

This place, which was thoroughly inimical to the living, perfectly fitted the description of a “hell world”. Even so, many creatures lived here, part of the Great Tomb of Nazarick.

For instance, demons.

Many demons were resistant to fire. Even hazardous environments like these would have no effect on them. Indeed, one could already see the outlines of several demons in the smoke clouds that hung low and heavy in the air.

In addition, there were corrupted spirits of fire called mephits, monsters who were resistant to fire. Further in, one could find undead with very strong resistance to fire. In addition—

—There was the meandering flow of a river of lava. The Death Knight was following its course, walking along the path that ran over a dam. Every now and then, he turned his gaze toward the lava.

Just at that moment, the gigantic, writhing creature that had been keeping pace with the Death Knight —though he could not tell if it was walking or swimming, given that he could not clearly see it beneath the lava— seemed to lose interest in him, and left.

That was the Area Guardian of the 7th Floor's River of Flame, a giant abyssal slime — Guren.

As a creature optimized for combat, its fighting ability was easily on par with the Floor Guardians.

If the Death Knight had been an enemy, he would have been dragged into the quicksand-like lava by Guren's tentacles and attacked by a virtually invisible opponent. Simply put, Guren was a far more dangerous opponent than Demiurge, this floor's Guardian. Because it did not need to breathe, it could hide its body in the magma, and defeating it with normal methods was nearly impossible.

Although the Death Knight did not think that Guren would

actually attack and all that might have just been a prank, the Death Knight knew that even a playful swat might have resulted in lethal amount of damage for him.

The feeling of relief was an utterly alien thing to an undead creature, but as Guren fell back, the Death Knight could understand that emotion.

The Death Knight continued its long strides. Soon, he could see a cluster of randomly-strewn white columns ahead. Once, this place might have been a majestic Grecian-style temple, but the columns were scattered like they had violently collided with each other, and the statues of various gods had been profaned and smashed. The ceiling had been broken down, and the pieces were lodged in the ground.

It resembled the ruins left after demons had cast the gods down from their place in heaven. Desolation permeated the entire scene.

And among them were the forms of demons that were far, far superior to the Death Knight.

They were the Evil Lords, demons that were around level 80.

Their eyes seemed to contain an emotion resembling curiosity. It was only a natural reaction given the appearance of a hitherto-unknown undead creature. However, they were still able to discern that the Death Knight was on the same side as them, so they did not indulge the basic demonic

instinct — to make others suffer.

They asked the Death Knight which Floor Guardian it served, with the utmost courtesy.

Their response to the Death Knight's answer was dramatic, to say the least. All of them respectfully bowed to him, and asked him the reason for his arrival in the most self-effacing language.

When they received the answer that he had arrived to speak to the relevant Floor Guardian and ask questions of him, one of their number promptly fell back, and almost immediately returned with another demon.

It wore a dirty white hood that concealed its features. Its body was twisted and lumpy, and it looked like it could whisper a few words to a human being to have them devolve into a demon.

It wore a large piece of golden jewelry on its neck, inscribed with what seemed like letters.

"Please come this way."

The Death Knight followed behind his guide.

After passing through the desecrated temple, they seemed to have arrived at the center of the area. A pale white throne sat atop the uneven, slightly lumpy ground, and atop that

throne sat the person the Death Knight had come to find.

He could feel Demiurge using his slitted eyes to probe him.

“Demiurge-sama. I have brought Ainz-sama’s messenger before you.”

“Thank you for your effort. Leave.”

Demiurge slowly rose to his feet.

Almost immediately, the Death Knight interjected that there was no need to stand on ceremony.

“Understood. You are... I see. As I thought... it’s like this. Just over an hour ago, someone passed through the seventh floor; would that be yourself?”

There was no doubt about that. After the Death Knight nodded in agreement, Demiurge smiled.

“So — what orders does Ainz-sama wish to give me?”
Demiurge’s smile seemed to gleam with anticipation.

Unsurprisingly, the first question was the same as the previous time.

“I see. This is Ainz-sama’s intention. Well then... I believe I can coordinate with any of the other Guardians in order to accomplish my objectives. However, I consider myself something of a jack of all trades, so during combat, I doubt I

could work very well with the command-oriented Aura. I feel I would work best when partnered with Cocytus, but as I said before, even if I were unable to get along with any of the guardians, if Ainz-sama willed it, I would match my abilities to those of any Guardian or their subordinates... indeed, even though I am ever-incompatible with Sebas, I doubt he would take any actions that ran counter to Ainz-sama's dictates."

Although the Death Knight had spoken with several other Guardians by now, this was the first time he had met anyone who actually said that they would not get along with anyone else. Perhaps if he was a living being, he might have followed up and asked more questions, but the Death Knight was undead and his heart was not troubled by such petty impulses. Seeing as Demiurge did not have any intention of continuing, he asked the next question.

"...My desires, then. Indeed, that is something of a challenge..."

Demiurge adjusted his glasses.

"...May I ask about the motives underlying that query? Oh, my apologies, you need not answer... it is the duty of an excellent subordinate to discern his master's true intentions and take the necessary action to fulfil them. Although, by my estimation, the exact nature of those motives can be narrowed down to two options, but which of them is correct? Or perhaps, the third..."

Demiurge was immune to fire, yet sweat drops began forming on his forehead. Although the Death Knight was freed from the burden of answering, it was not as though he could have answered in the first place. In the end, the muttering and murmuring Demiurge finally exhaled at the end of his ruminations.

“It must be one of these two options. First, if Ainz-sama wishes to know which domain this one wishes to govern for him after the world becomes his, then I will ask for the right to administer the sky on his behalf.”

The Death Knight nodded. After all, only his master could decide who received the sky.

“Alternatively, if he wishes to know what I would require to strengthen Nazarick, then my answer is that I would need nothing. Although I do not know if you can fully convey the message to our master, I hope you will observe this domain.”

Demiurge spread his arms.

“This land, this dominion was designed and created for me by Ulbert-sama, so it contains everything I need to perform my function. Indeed, it may appear as a mere ruin to you, and the center where we stand may seem like a little more than a barren waste, but many things are hidden within it. These tumbled ruins are the true expression of Ulbert-sama’s love.”

Demiurge was all smiles.

“Still, an answer like that would be entirely too boring. If Ainz-sama is interested in replying, then please convey to him the fact that there is an answer I would like to know. Originally, I was intended to rule over twelve demons, yet now only seven remain. I would be honored if he could tell me the reason why.”

Demiurge recited the names of the missing demons — Garira, label, Belias, Kainon, Abiretsia.

“I pray you will ask the master if these five demons remain in Nazarick. Then, is there anything else?”

The Death Knight shook his head.

“Is that so. Then, permit me to escort you to the teleport gate.”

The Death Knight indicated that he did not require such an entourage. After all, he clearly understood his master’s desire not to be seen by any of the Guardians.

With that, the Death Knight bade Demiurge farewell, and walked alone to the teleport gate.

This time, his master did not speak to him.

After entering the teleport gate and returning to the 9th floor,

he heard his master's voice. He was instructed to return to Ainz's room, and perhaps he might have begun sprinting, but then he remembered the encounter with the maid.

Instead, the Death Knight elected a quiet jog that would not invite censure, and as he considered how he might sometimes howl from time to time, he covered his mouth with both hands as a countermeasure against that.

After taking several turns, he finally saw the servants guarding his master's chambers. They remembered him from when he had left the room, so they immediately stepped away from the door and let him through.

After opening the door, Ainz jumped in fright and slipped something under the table that the Death Knight could not see. After seeing that it was the Death Knight who had opened the door, Ainz breathed a sigh of relief and raised his right hand.

"...Huh? So it was you. For a moment I remembered what surprise felt like... well, next time, knock before you enter."

Ainz, while sticking the book in his right hand back into his pocket dimension, muttered imprecations at the Death Knight who was carefully closing the door.

Normally, his master should have been able to feel the Death Knight's presence and location. Perhaps his shock came from the fact that all of his attention was focused on the book he

had just put away.

“Well, then. Let me hear Demiurge’s answers.”

As the Death Knight spoke about the people Demiurge was close to and distant from, for want of anything better to say, Ainz — even though he had no expression on his face due to being a skeleton — smiled.

“I see. Well, it works if I picture them as the people who created them. Touch-san and Ulbert-san. Ah, those were the days...”

From his pocket space, Ainz withdrew a silver plate that was larger than his hand. After manipulating the plate, an image appeared on it.

This image depicted over thirty heteromorphic creatures, and Ainz pointed to two of them.

“These two never really got along before the formation of Ainz Ooal Gown. Outside of these group photos, you would almost never see them in the same picture together. I think you could count those pictures with the fingers on one hand, and that includes the one we took after conquering Nazarick. Really... those two never got along.”

Although he seemed to be explaining this to the Death Knight, he knew that his master was not really speaking to him. As such, the Death Knight did not make any reply. He sensed that that was what his master had hoped for.

“So children take after their parents after all...”

Ainz seemed to cherish this plate dearly, given the satisfied look he had.

“Like their fathers... hm? Like their parents?”

Ainz furrowed his nonexistent brows.

“Well, *that* fellow seems pretty lively, I should probably go visit... or not. Even just looking makes me feel... huh, is that it? I feel... uneasy? Hmm... Unease, is it. Hah, well then, let me hear the rest.”

Hearing “the sky” as the answer seemed to surprise Ainz.

“Did he really say that?”

The Death Knight nodded deeply.

“The sky, huh... well, he really does set his sights high... what an unexpectedly romantic gesture. Or did he come up with that when we were looking at the night sky? What an unexpectedly interesting fellow Demiurge is. One might even call it an innocent desire... Well, no matter what, I can’t give him the sky, but I could give him something close enough.”

The other answer was “I need nothing to strengthen Nazarick”, and Ainz’s face was a picture of shock after he heard it. The Death Knight relayed the rest of Demiurge’s

words to his master, and after hearing them, Ainz sighed.

“He’s absolutely right. That’s exactly it. Every Guardian lives in a place filled with everyone’s feelings. Yet I —thinking I could do better than their creators— went to ask them what else they needed. What was I thinking? The only answer they should be able to give is that they don’t need anything. Back then, when I designed Pandora’s Actor, I also gave him a fully-equipped place to live in. Although that was meant to be our secret base... ah, how embarrassing, how foolish I was. I... am I really fit to rule, to manage this place?”

Silence descended over them for a moment.

The air was somber and heavy, but the Death Knight could not speak any words of comfort, because he had not been allowed to do so.

His master looked back to him with a bitter look on his face.

“Since it was my decision, I should see it through to the end. After all, this is also a lesson to remind myself of my own foolishness. Then, the last one should be Albedo. Go, then.”

But the Death Knight did not move. It could not move.

That was because it did not know anything about the subject in question.

As for why—

“What’s wrong? Why aren’t you moving? Before that, Albedo’s room... where is it, anyway?”

Part 7

Summoned or created monsters could be banished in several ways — when their summoning time ended, when they took too much damage, or when their masters manually dismissed them. When a monster was banished from taking too much damage, it was a common tactic to immediately re-summon another monster of the same type.

After Ainz banished the Death Knight, he cast ‘Message’. Like a telephone call connecting, Ainz began speaking once he felt the link form.

“—Albedo.”

『—Yes, Ainz-sama? What do you wish of me?』

“No, it’s nothing important, I just wish to chat with you. Where are you now?”

『A, a chat! You have but to give me an order and I will rush to your side!』

“There’s no need for you to go to that trouble. I just wish to chat with you in your room. Where are you now?”

『M-My! In my room?!』

The shrill screech of delight suddenly turned into a somber deadpan.

『I am in the throne room...』

“Do you mean you’re patrolling the throne room?”

The reply was off by just a beat.

『No, not that... if you will permit me this disrespect, it is, in a sense, my bedroom...』

Ainz pictured the throne room in his mind, and fell silent. That room was certainly a luxurious one, yet as a place to live in, it was quite lacking.

The frantic reply came from Albedo, who seemed to have misinterpreted Ainz’s silence as something else entirely.

『M-my deepest apologies, to think I considered Ainz-sama’s grand throne room to be my own sleeping area! If it displeases Ainz-sama, I will depart this place at once!』

Ainz said nothing, but activated his ring.

After reaching the room with the hemispherical ceiling that was flanked by dozens of golems, he promptly pushed open the great doors that were carved with angels and demons.

The doors slowly opened, revealing the grand sight of the

throne room to his eyes.

“Albedo!”

Ainz shouted the name of the Overseer of the Guardians.

Albedo was frozen in panic by the side of the throne, and even at this distance he could clearly see that Albedo’s perfect features were frozen solid.

“Albedo! Forgive me!”

Ainz strode forward as he apologized.

“I chose this place to be your room. It was my fault that I did not assign you appropriate quarters. Forgive me.”

To be precise, the blame belonged to Tabula Smaragdina. After all, he should have been the one to give Albedo a place to live. But one had to consider the fact that before they had been transported to this New World, Albedo had been nothing more than a collection of data. Expecting him to account for this possibility and design a room for her would have been too much even for his obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Granted, Ainz and the creators of the other Guardians had done so, but that was hardly normal. Although Tabula Smaragdina was a setting maniac who produced extremely long design documents for his creations, his imagination was probably within normal parameters.

If one had to point a finger at someone, then Ainz could only nominate one person.

That was Ainz Ooal Gown.

The name of the only person —so far— who had come to this brave new world.

After coming to this world, the NPCs began moving according to their own will. Then, before that, he should have understood their respective situations and ensured the quality of their living conditions, in order to ensure they could carry out their duties without any inconvenience.

To think, in this place...

Ainz forcefully stepped on the bright red carpet, gritting his teeth. The floor was white marble, and when he raised his head he could see the ceiling, a broad and empty space.

There was nothing here which could support life.

To think, she had to sleep in this place!

He remembered the grouses he had heard from Herohero-san.

—We had to use sleeping bags in the office, and I ended up buying two of them. One of them was for when the other one was being cleaned. Hahaha—

Ainz felt like he had been beaten about the head with a bat. He wanted to fall to his knees and genuflect while crying and begging for forgiveness.

You said so much about not letting Herohero-san's situation show up in Nazarick... Ainz, you've committed a grave sin, an unforgivable mistake!

Although his emotion override had already activated numerous times, Ainz was still consumed by guilt.

“What are you saying? The Supreme Beings have granted me this place. Therefore, I must use it to accomplish their aims with all—”

“Say no more, Albedo.”

Ainz had finally reached the base of the steps, and he raised his hand as he mounted them to silence Albedo.”

“This was caused by my carelessness. I will immediately prepare a room for you. Do you have anywhere you wish to stay?”

Albedo's eyes flickered left and right. Ainz took this to be a sign of her thinking, and calmly watched her in silence.

After a long time, which was probably a sign of the deep thought she had put into this, Albedo finally replied.

“Although this might be somewhat bold, as long as I can stay by Ainz-sama’s side, anywhere will be fine. After all, I am the most adept at defense among the Guardians. Nobody is better at guarding Ainz-sama’s body than myself. However, if I am separated from Ainz-sama, then there may be a chance he may come to harm, be it one in a million or a billion. As such, I would be happy to be granted a corner somewhere in Ainz-sama’s room...”

As Albedo quickly replied, she leaned forward desperately, her wings flapping loudly.

Although he had considered satisfying her wish by all means, sharing a room would pose some problems after all.

Since his body did not possess sexual desires and he had lost various things, he was confident that he would not do anything despicable to her. However, if she lived with him, he would have no time to secretly read his books, and he would have to constantly keep up his ruler’s facade, and that would only increase the mental stress he was under.

“Indeed, my chambers are large, but I must sadly deny your request.”

“Is that so...”

Albedo’s wings drooped. As Ainz saw this, his feelings of guilt intensified.

“More to the point, I believe the Guardians of the various Floors will not permit any intruders of this mighty fortress Nazarick to make their way to my bedchamber. Is that not so?”

“It is as you say.”

Ainz’s mind worked furiously as he saw Albedo with her wings drooped. If he had to pick personal quarters from the 9th and 10th floors, he would have to rule out the 10th floor because all the rooms there had been designed for other purposes, which would leave the 9th floor. On that floor, the only empty rooms he was aware of were the ones that belonged to his former companions.

Although it might just be wishful thinking, but if he lent one of their rooms to Albedo, his heart would forever be filled with doubt that he might have deprived a guildmate who had come to this world of their rightful room, however miniscule that possibility might be.

Rather than lend out a room belonging to one of his companions, it would be better to lend her one of the spare rooms.

“Then, Albedo. I shall grant you one of the rooms on the ninth floor for your own use. It is a spare room prepared for the possibility that we might welcome new additions to the guild. Of course, I will try to give you a room as close to mine as possible, and if an emergency happens — yes, when the time

comes, can I count on you?”

“Yes! Of course! That goes without saying, Ainz-sama!”

Her wings suddenly spread themselves out.

As he saw Albedo’s shining eyes and the brilliant smile on her face, Ainz could not help but be moved. To camouflage that, Ainz coughed loudly.

“Then, I will lead you to your new room. We’ll go once you finish packing your things.”

As Ainz said this, he wondered whether she had anything to pack.

The NPCs should have inventory pocket spaces like Ainz did for storing equipment. It might have looked to others like they were sticking their hands into nothing, but in truth it was more like using a smartphone. While players — with their access to cash items — could store much more in their inventories than NPCs could, even NPCs could still fit all of their equipment into their inventories.

It was very likely that Albedo’s equipment was stored in her inventory. The things in there should be recovery items and scrolls that allowed her to use magic.

“Understood. Then, I apologize for the delay, but could you hold on a little longer?”

“Ah, ahhh...”

Ainz wavered a little because the answer was an unexpected one.

“Those words should be mine to speak. Then, Albedo, go fetch your things.”

“Yes.”

Albedo’s wings fluttered loudly as she took flight.

As a succubus, her wings were not simply for decoration.

After flying about three stories into the air, she fiddled with a part of a wall, and retrieved a bag that was big enough that she had to embrace it with both hands to carry it. As a Guardian, her physical strength was great enough that she could lift it easily. Because of that, he could not tell what was inside.

“...Are these your things?”

“Yes. These are the items Tabula Smaragdina-sama left to me. Do you wish to see them?”

“Ah? Ahhhh. Speaking of which, Tabula Smaragdina, he... hm. Would you mind letting me look inside?”

Although Tabula Smaragdina had not prepared a room for Albedo, he had still set aside this bag for her. His curiosity

over what was inside the bag intensified.

There might be special items inside... or not.

If it was really a rare item... the collector in Ainz would find it hard to control himself.

“Please have a look.”

As he looked beyond the open zipper, the inside seemed about as large as it appeared on the outside, and there didn't seem to be any special items in there. Nor was there a blood-caked corpse staring out at him with hatred in its eyes or anything like that.

What he saw was many neatly folded sets of clothing, all of which were very normal articles of female wear. There was nothing which aroused Ainz's interest. However, under the clothes were many small multicolored objects that had been balled up. It was impossible not to notice them. Since Tabula Smaragdina was a fan of horror movies, he didn't know what he would find next. That mix of fear and curiosity piqued his interest.

“Are those... handkerchiefs?”

“...They are not, Ainz-sama. Why don't you pick one up and have a closer look?”

Albedo stood there quietly, with a mysterious smile on her

face.

In that moment, his anticipation rose ever higher.

Yes, they might be joined together by some kind of gimmick...

With excitement in his heart, Ainz reached for a balled up lump and opened it up.

After that was silence.

Even Ainz knew what that was.

It was underwear. Female underwear.

“Isn’t this... what Peroroncino-san would do...? How should I say this... it seems I’ve learned too much information about a friend...”

As Ainz’s shoulders sagged, he remembered that he had not yet apologized to someone who deserved an apology.

“...Forgive me, Albedo.”

As Albedo watched Ainz’s movements, her face flushed red, and her breathing grew irregular.

A very uncomfortable Ainz tried to fold the opened panties back up, but couldn’t quite manage it. So Albedo gave him a hand from the side, and neatly folded them.

“I’m not Peroroncino-san, I won’t get excited by a piece of cloth if it’s not worn by someone.”

In order to hide his discomfort, Ainz tried to muddle his way through with words he didn’t quite understand. Suddenly, Ainz remembered that he had no idea what had happened to the erotic art he’d received from his former guildmates.

“Then... do you need me to wear it for inspection?”

A shocked Ainz looked sideways at Albedo, whose eyes radiated a lewd glow.

“Ah, wait, Albedo. Before that, let’s settle the matter of your room. I’ll take you there with the power of the ring, so let’s go.”

“Understood, Ainz-sama.”

As Albedo drew close, wrapping Ainz in her scent and tickling him with her breath, he activated the power of his ring.

Epilogue

The room she had been given was luxurious. No, as a room which was worthy of the Supreme Beings, that much was only to be expected.

Behind the desk in the center of the room was the sparkling flag of Ainz Ooal Gown,

Not long after she had watched her master leave with a cheerful smile on her face, a change came over her, and her face was as cold as winter.

“—Hmph.”

Albedo raised the flag with one hand, and opened the door within.

Inside was the bedroom of an absolute ruler of Nazarick.

After entering the room and ensuring it was properly locked, she cast the flag aside.

The brilliant flag fell to the ground.

“The Ainz Ooal Gown which abandoned us... It makes me mad.”

Although she had been filled with joy when her beloved had

taken that name for his own, that had turned to worry when she realised that it also referred to the people who upset her.

With a fiendish expression on her face, Albedo approached the flag on the floor and raised her foot to step on it.

“—Shit! How dare these pieces of shit insult my love’s name!”

Albedo cursed freely as she trampled the flag. With her breathing in chaos, she seemed to notice something and raised her face, whose expression softened as she saw it.

Albedo opened her inventory and drew forth a large new flag. She rubbed it against her face with a blissful expression, and then when it was not enough, she rubbed her entire body against it.

The flag she was holding was one of the 41 displayed before the throne, the one representing his own name that Momonga had struck down.

Albedo had swiftly retrieved it after the fact.

“Ahhh, Ainz-sama. No, Momonga-sama. Only you are my true master. I shall make you the sole ruler of Nazarick. There’s no need for those other people. Only you, and only you will rule forever—”

As though her master were truly there, Albedo chanted those

words in a moist, breathy tone.

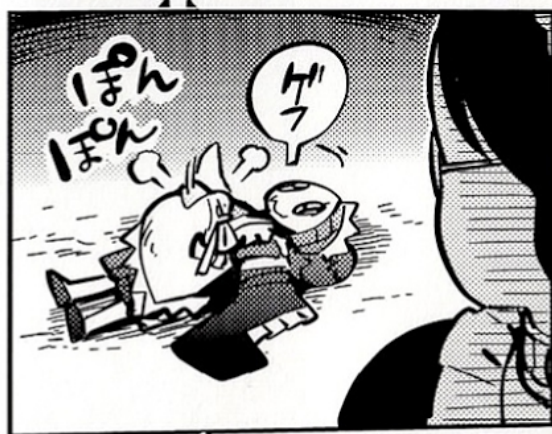
“Yes, absolutely. If anyone tries to stop you, I will destroy them even if they’re a Guardian. I am your true follower, your loyal slave. So please, bestow your compassion upon my body...”

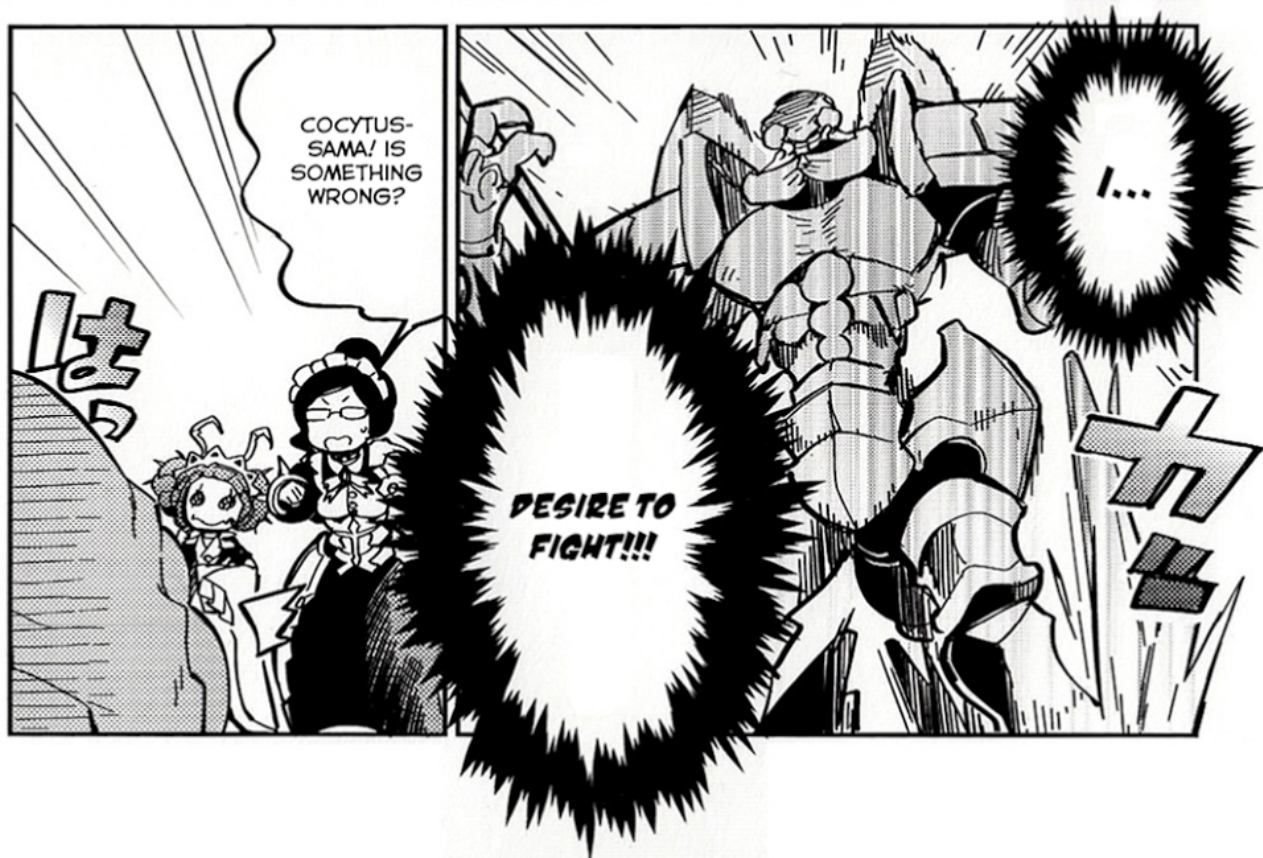
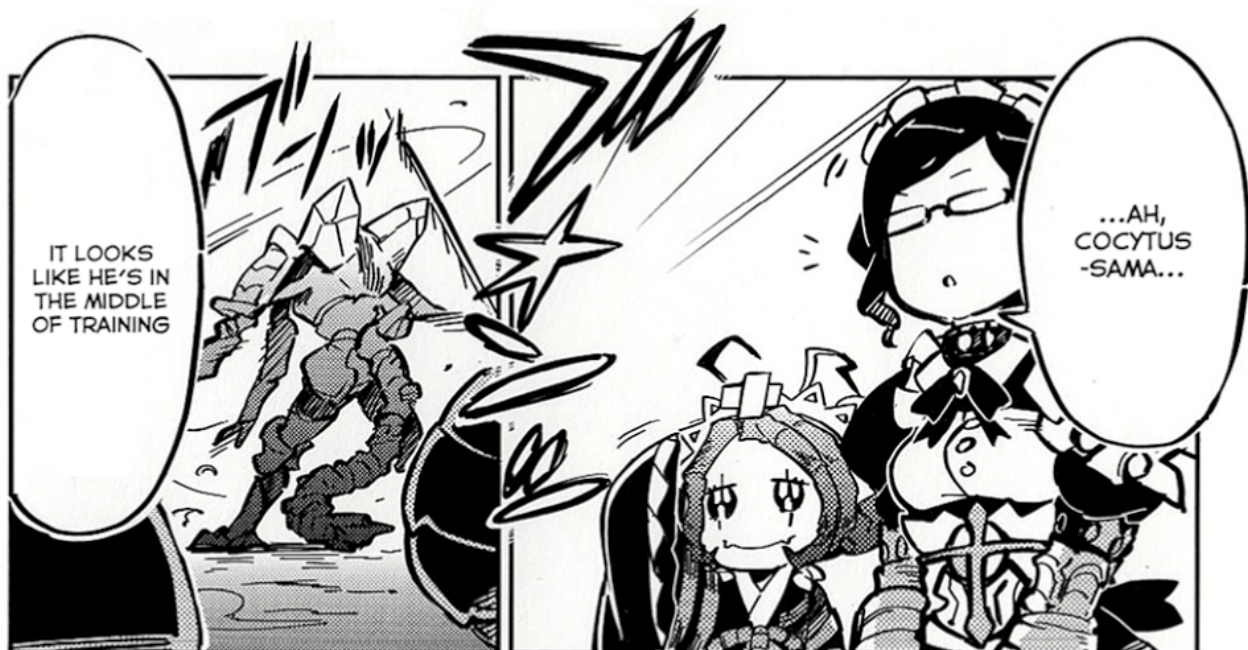
She slowly slid her hand downward, to the lower reaches of her belly.

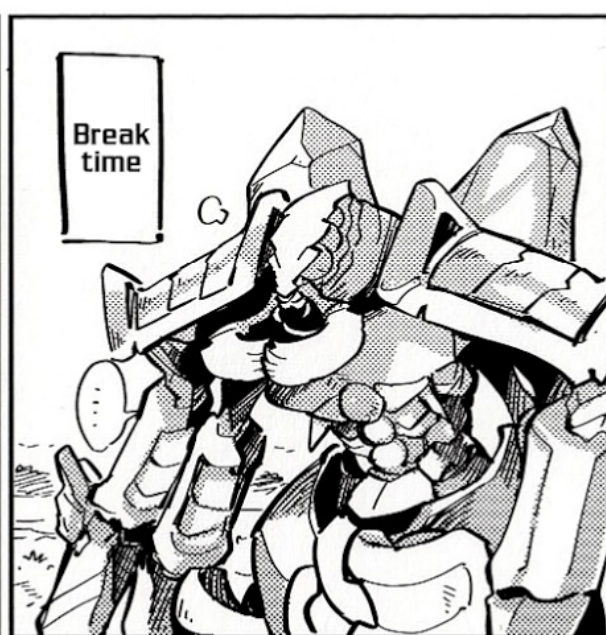
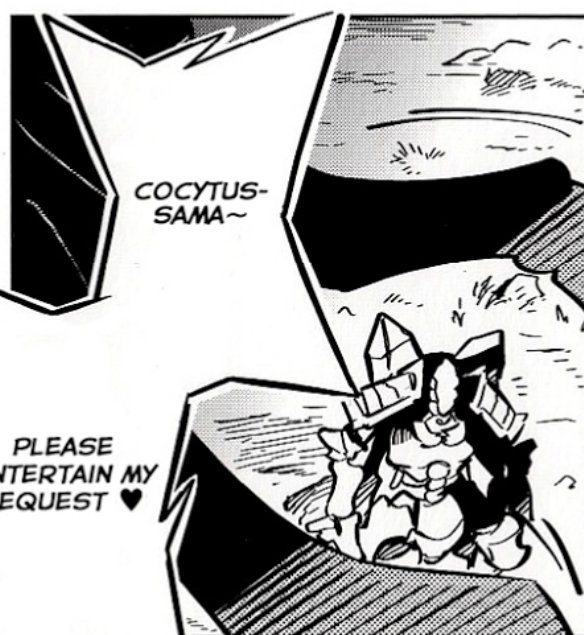


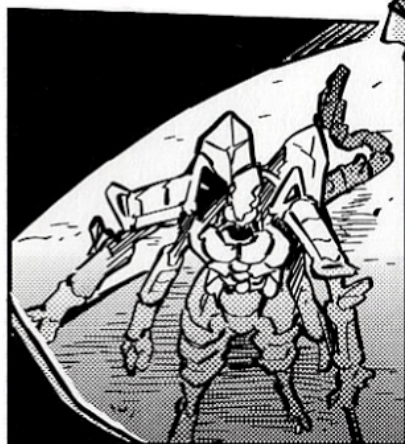


◇ *She used "boku", then switched to "watashi"

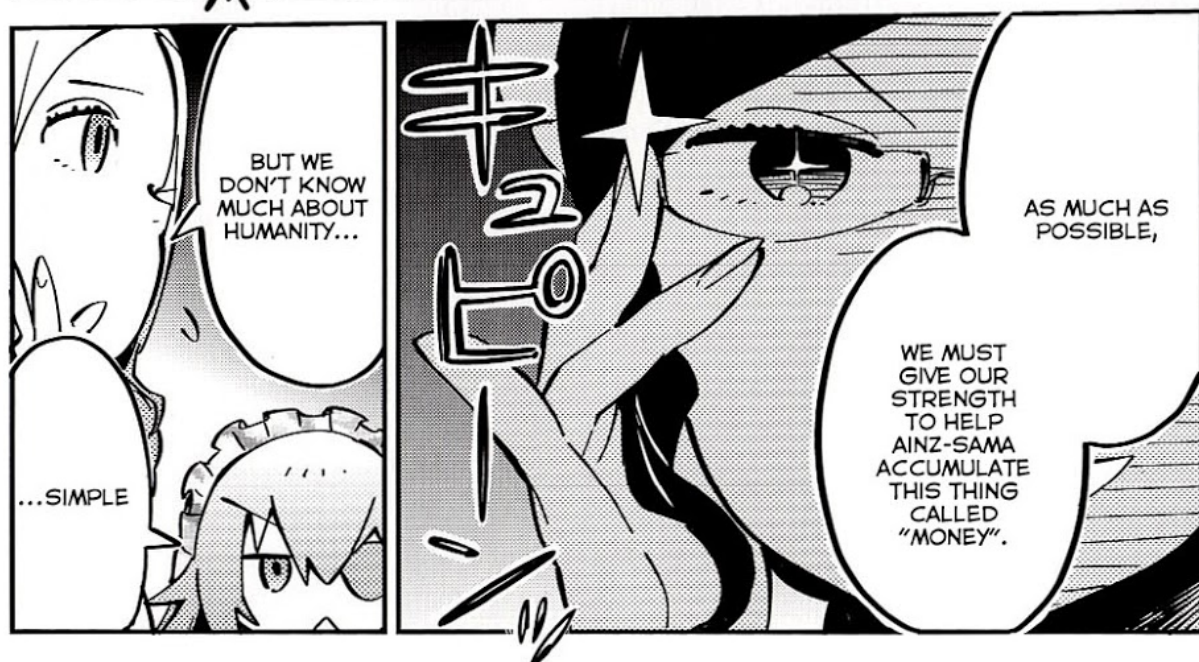
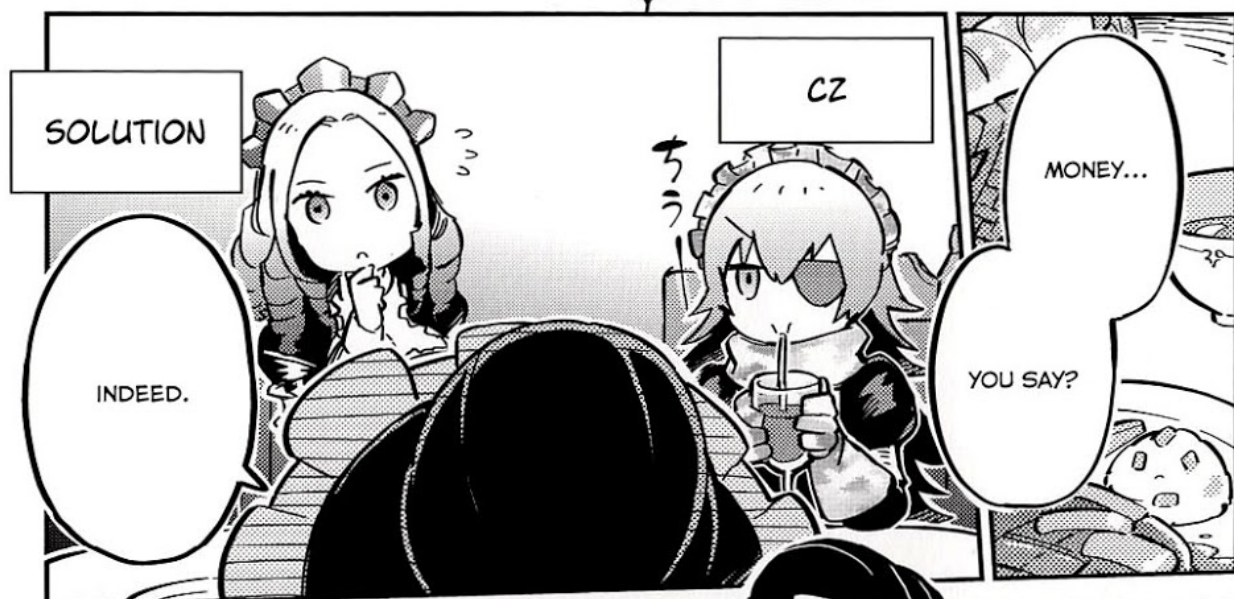




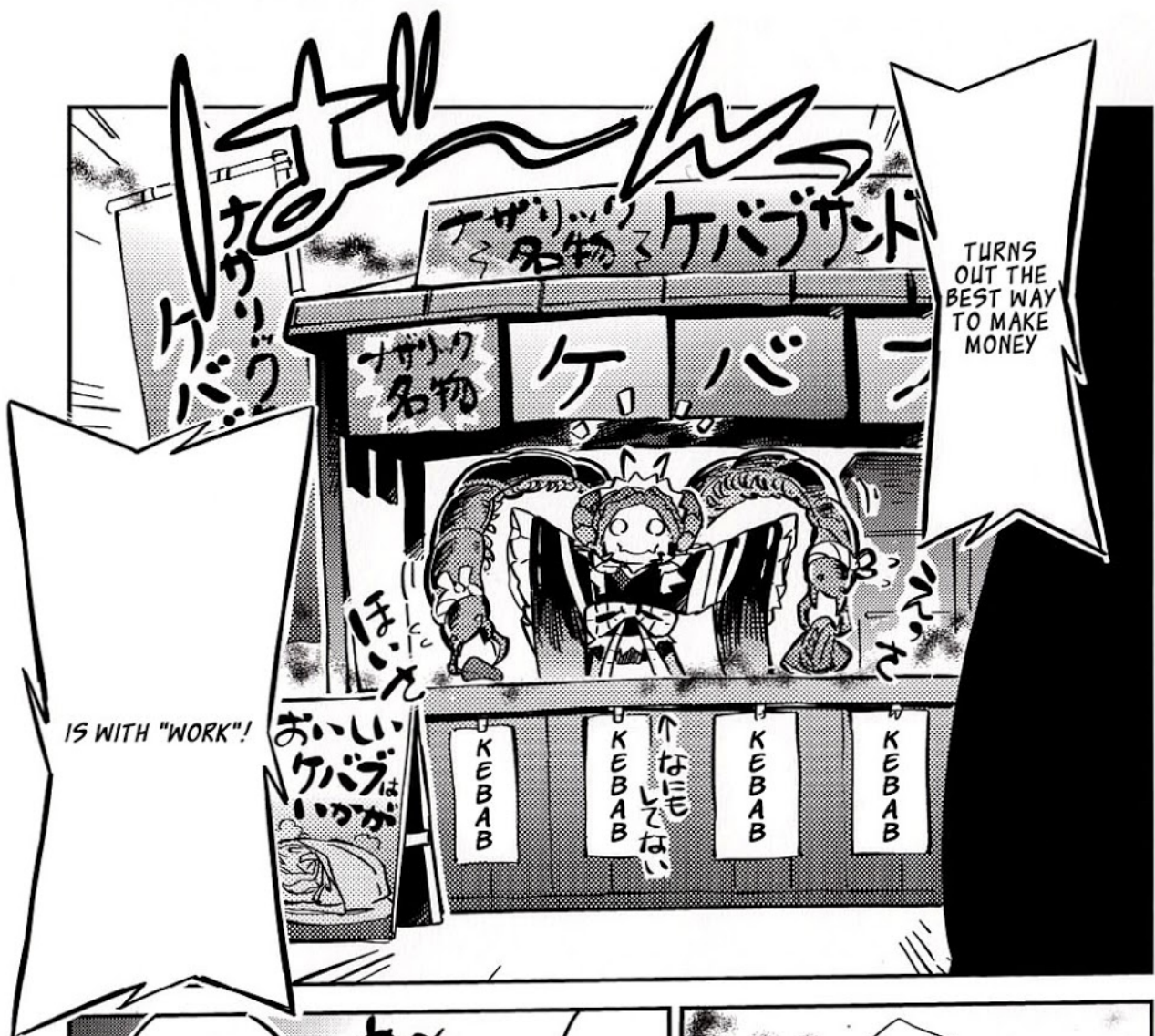




◆ A DAY ◆ AT WORK









ARA ARA,
DEMIURGE-
SAMA, WHAT DO
YOU NEED?

AH, IT'S JUST
THAT THE
NUMBER OF
CORPSES FROM
THE SUNLIGHT
SCRIPTURE
SEEMS TO HAVE
DECREASED...

did someone
take them for
experiments
without
telling me?



...



i'm sorryyyyyy

あなたの子は!

どうい?